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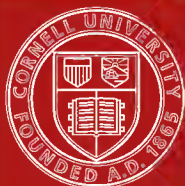
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KATHARINE WALTON



KATHARINE WALTON

OR

THE REBEL OF DORCHESTER

BY W. GILMORE SIMMS, Esq.

AUTHOR OF "THE YEMASSEE," "THE PARTISAN," "MELLICHAMPE," "THE
SCOUT," "WOODCRAFT," "GUY RIVERS," ETC.

"Every minute now
Should be the father of some stratagem."
KING HENRY VII.

NEW AND REVISED EDITION



New York:
A. C. ARMSTRONG & SON,
714 BROADWAY.

1882.

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tion, I do not scruple to challenge your regards, for that art, in fiction, which, while you were upon the bench, among the big-wigged gentry, would have been very much out of place, occupying any share of your consideration, and certainly not to be held for a moment of any authority in the formation of your solemn judgments. Now, you may luxuriate in the treasures of romance, without endangering the dignity of law—now, you may feed upon song and story without rendering suspicious the ultimate decrees of justice. No one now, of all the Burleighs of society, will chide you with rewarding the muse too extravagantly; or throw up hand and eyes, in holy horror, to find you poring over the pages of Scott and Cooper, instead of the better-authorized, and more musty volumes of Bracton and Fleta, Littleton and Sir Edward Coke—to enumerate no other of those grave monsters of great profundity—I will not say dullness lest I ruffle your lingering veneration—whom “even to name,” by one who has utterly renounced their authority, “would be unlawful.” You may now, in brief, recover all your natural tastes, without disturbing the peace of society, or vexing the sensibilities of convention—recover all the tastes which the legal profession expects you to surrender, and with an eye newly opening to art, and a soul growing daily more and more sensible to the truth in fiction, acquire a better sense of the sweet in humanity, and the beguiling and blessing which always compensate (no matter what the cost) in the higher regions of the ideal. Nay, even though you put down the books of Scott and Cooper to take up mine, it will somewhat reconcile you to the rebuke of taste, when you reflect that I summon to my aid the muse of local History—the traditions of our own home—the chronicles of our own section—the deeds of our native heroes—the recollections of our own noble ancestry.

“Katharine Walton,” the romance which I now venture to inscribe with your name, constitutes a sequel to “The Partisan,” and is the third of a trilogy, designed especially to illustrate an important period, in our parish country, during the progress of the Revolution. You are quite as familiar with the scene occupied by the action in these stories as myself, and quite as well taught in the general characteristics of the actors. Of my hand-

ling of these subjects, it becomes me to say nothing. But while I forbear all remark upon the plan and conduct of these romances, I may be permitted to say that they were, when originally published, so many new developments and discoveries to our people. They opened the way to historical studies among us—they suggested clews to the historian—they struck and laid bare to other workers, the veins of tradition which everywhere enriched our territory—they showed to succeeding laborers—far abler than myself—what treasures of *materiel*, lay waiting for the shaping hands of future genius. When I first began these fictions, no one dreamed of the abundance of our possessions of this sort—that a scene or story, picture or statue, had been wrought out of the crude masses which lay buried in our soil. My friends denounced my waste of time upon scenes, and situations, and events, in which they beheld nothing latent—nothing which could possibly (as they thought) reward the laborer. Now, South Carolina is regarded as a very storehouse for romance. She has furnished more materials for the use of art and fiction, than half the states in the Union. Regarding myself as nearly at the end of my labors and career, I may be permitted to suggest this comparison, with a natural feeling of pride and satisfaction.

A few words more. While "The Partisan," and "Mellichampe," occupied ground in the interior, scenes at the head of the Ashley, and along the Santee and Wateree, "Katharine Walton" brings us to the city; and a large proportion of the work, and much of its interest, will be found to consist in the delineation of the social world of Charleston, during the Revolutionary period. These delineations are so many careful studies, pursued through a series of many years, and under the guidance of the most various and the best authorities. The matter, in fact, is mostly historical, even when merely social. The portraits are mostly of real persons. The descriptions of life, manners, customs, movements, the social aspects in general, have all been drawn from sources as unquestionable as abundant. The social reunions, in many instances, as described in the story, were real occurrences. The anecdotes, the very repartees, though never before in print, are gathered from tradition and

authority. I have, in a great part of the story, contented myself with simply framing the fact; preferring to render my materials unique, rather than to put them upon record as bold and casual reminiscences.

The trilogy contemplated when I began "The Partisan," is now complete with "Katharine Walton," though it will be found that certain of the *dramatis personæ* of this series, have a prolonged existence, in another romance, yet to follow, which opens at the moment when the war of the Revolution closes; and is designed to show the effects of that conflict upon the condition of the country, the fortunes of its people, and the general *morale* of society. But of this, nothing need be spoken now. Enough for the present, and for the volume in your hands. I do not ask, my dear Frost, that this book shall take the place with you, or with any of your ancient brethren, of the fathers in the law; but shall be quite satisfied, if when the Bigwigs are fairly shelved, or under the table—out of sight and mind—you closet yourself for an hour with my heroine of the Ashley; a woman drawn, I honestly think, after our best models of good manners, good taste, good intellect, and noble, generous sensibilities; frank, buoyant, and refined; yet superior to mere convention.

"A spirit, yet a woman too!
Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin liberty!—
A creature not too bright nor good
For human nature's daily food;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles."

Yielding you now to the lady, while the south wind sweeps in from the sea, bringing you perfumes of orange from the groves of Hayti and the Cuban, I leave you, my dear Frost, to the most genial embraces of the summer.

Very faithfully, your friend, &c.

W. GILMORE SIMMS.

KATHARINE WALTON.

CHAPTER I.

OLD SOLDIERS.

OUR story opens early in September, in the eventful year of American revolutionary history, one thousand seven hundred and eighty. Our scene is one destined to afford abundant materials for the purposes of the future romancer. It lies chiefly upon the banks of the Ashley, in South Carolina, a region which, at this period, was almost entirely covered by the arms of the foreign enemy. In previous narratives, as well as in the histories, will be found the details of his gradual conquests, and no one need be told of the events following the fall of Charleston, and terminating in the defeat of General Gates at Camden, by which, for a season, the hopes of patriotism, as well as the efforts of valor which aimed at the recovery of the country from hostile domination, were humbled, if not wholly overthrown. The southern liberating army was temporarily dispersed, rallying slowly to their standards in the wildernesses of North Carolina; few in number, miserably clad, and almost totally wanting in the means and appliances of war. The victory of the British over Gates was considered complete. It was distinguished by their usual sacrifices. Many of their prisoners were executed upon the spot, mostly upon the smallest pretexts and the most questionable testimony. These sacrifices were due somewhat

to the requisitions of the loyalists, to the excited passions of the conquerors, and, in some degree, to their own scorn of the victims. But one of those decreed for sacrifice had made his escape, rescued, in the moment of destined execution, by a most daring and unexpected onslaught of a small body of partisans, led by a favorite leader. Colonel Richard Walton, a gentleman of great personal worth, of considerable wealth, and exercising much social influence, had, under particular circumstances, and when the state was believed to be utterly lost to the confederacy, taken what was entitled "British protection." This was a parole, insuring him safety and shelter beneath the protection of the conqueror, so long as he preserved his neutrality. It was some reproach to Colonel Walton that he had taken this protection; but, in the particular circumstances of the case, there was much to extenuate his offence. With his justification, however, just at this moment, we have nothing to do. It is enough that the violation of the compact between the citizen and the conqueror was due to the British commander. In the emergency of invasion, at the approach of the continental arms, the securities of those who had taken protection were withdrawn by proclamation, unless they presented themselves in the British ranks and took up arms under the banner of the invader. Compelled to draw the sword, Colonel Walton did so on the side of the country. He fell into the hands of Cornwallis at the fatal battle of Camden; and, steadily refusing the overtures of the British general to purge himself of the alleged treason by taking a commission in the service of the conqueror, he was ordered to execution at Dorchester, in the neighborhood of his estates, and as an example of terror to the surrounding country. He was rescued at the foot of the gallows, from the degrading death which had been decreed him. By a well-planned and desperate enterprise, led by Major Singleton, a kinsman, he was plucked from the clutches of the executioner; and the successful effort was still farther distinguished by the almost total annihilation of the strong guard of the British, which had left the garrison at Dorchester to escort the victim to the fatal tree.

The beautiful hamlet of Dorchester was partially laid in ashes during the short but sanguinary conflict; and, before reinforce-

ments could arrive from the fortified post at the place, the partisans had melted away, like so many shadows, into the swamps of the neighboring cypress, carrying with them, in safety, their enfranchised captive. The occurrence had been one rather to exasperate the invader than to disturb his securities. It was not less an indignity than a hurt; and, taking place, as it did, within twenty miles of the garrison of Charleston, it denoted a degree of audacity, on the part of the rebels, which particularly called for the active vengeance of the invader, as an insult and a disgrace to his arms.

But if the mortification of Major Proctor, by whom the post at Dorchester was held, was great, still greater was the fury of Colonel Balfour, the commandant of Charleston. The intelligence reached him, by express, at midnight of the day of the affair, and roused him from the grateful slumbers of a life which had hitherto been fortunate in the acquisition of every desired indulgence, and from dreams holding forth the most delicious promise of that *otium cum dignitate* which was in the contemplation of all his toils. To be aroused to such intelligence as had been brought him, was to deny him both leisure and respect—nay, to involve him in possible forfeiture of the possession of place and power, which, he well knew, were of doubtful tenure only, and easily determined by a run of such disasters as that which he was now required to contemplate. Yet Balfour, in reality, had nothing with which to reproach himself in the affair at Dorchester. No blame, whether of omission or performance, could be charged upon him, making him liable to reproach for this misfortune. He had no reason to suppose that, with Rawdon in command at Camden, and Cornwallis, but recently the victor over Gates, with the great body of the British army covering every conspicuous point in the country, that any small party of rebels should prove so daring as to dart between and snatch the prey from the very grasp of the executioner. Marion had, however, done this upon the Santee, and here now was his lieutenant repeating the audacious enterprise upon the Ashley. Though really not to blame, Balfour yet very well knew how severe were the judgments which, in Great Britain, were usually visited upon the misfortunes or failures of British captains in

America. He had no reason to doubt that in his case, as commonly in that of others, his superiors would be apt to cast upon the subordinate the responsibilities of every mischance. It is true that he might offer good defence. He could show that, in order to strengthen his army against Gates, Cornwallis had stripped the city of nearly all its disposable force, leaving him nothing but invalids, and a command of cavalry not much more than sufficient to scour the neighborhood, bring in supplies, and furnish escorts. Dorchester had been shorn of its garrison for the same reason by the same officer. The reproach, if any, lay at the door of Cornwallis. Yet who would impute blame to the successful general, who offers his plea while yet his trumpets are sounding in every ear with the triumphal notes of a great victory? Success is an argument that effectually stops the mouth of censure. To fasten the reproach upon another, by whom no plea of good fortune could be offered, was the policy of Balfour; and his eye was already turned upon the victim. But this, hereafter. For the present, his task was to repair, if possible, the misfortune; to recover the freed rebel; to put Dorchester in a better state to overawe the surrounding country, and make himself sure in his position by timely reports of the affair to his superiors; by which, showing them where the fault might be imputable to themselves, while studiously imputing it to another, he should induce them to such an adoption of his views as should silence all representations which might be hurtful to his own security.

All these meditations passed rapidly through the brain of Balfour, as he made his midnight toilet. When he came forth, his plans were all complete. As we are destined to see much more of this personage in the progress of our narrative, it will not be unwise, in this place, to dwell somewhat more particularly upon the mental and moral nature of the man. At the period of which we write, he was in the vigor of his years. He had kept well, to borrow the idiom of another people, and was altogether a very fine specimen of physical manhood. With an erect person, fully six feet in height, broad-chested, and athletic; with cheeks un wrinkled, a skin clear and florid; eyes large, blue, and tolerably expressive; and features generally well-

eliseled, he was altogether a person to impose at a glance, and almost persuade, without further examination, to the conviction of generous impulses, if not a commanding intellect, as the natural concomitants of so much that is prepossessing in the exterior. But Balfour was a man of neither mind nor heart. In ordinary affairs, he was sufficiently shrewd and searching. It was not easy, certainly to delude him, where his selfish interests were at all at issue. In the mere details of business, he was methodical and usually correct; but he neither led nor planned an enterprise; and, while able in civil matters to carry out the designs of others, it is not seen that he ever counselled or conceived an improvement. His passions were more active than his mind, yet they never impelled him to courageous performance. He was a carpet knight, making a famous figure always on parade, and, in the splendid uniform of his regiment, really a magnificent person—in the language of a lady who knew him well, “as splendid as scarlet, gold lace, and feathers, could make a man.” But he never distinguished himself in action. Indeed, the record is wanting which would show that he had ever been in action. That he should have risen to his high station, as second in command of the British army in South Carolina—for such was his rank—might reasonably provoke our surprise, but that the record which fails to tell us of his achievements in battle, is somewhat more copious in other matters. His method of rising into power was among the reproaches urged against him. His obsequious devotedness to the humors and pleasures—we may safely say vices—of Sir William Howe, first gained him position, and finally led to his present appointment. In the capacity of commandant at Charleston, his arrogance became insufferable. His vanity seems to have been in due degree with the servility which he had been forced to show in the acquisition of his objects. He could enact the opposite phases in the character of his countryman, Sir Pertmax MacSycophant, without an effort at transition—*boo* without shame or sense of degradation, and command without decency or sense of self-respect. In counsel, he was at once ignorant and self-opinionated. In the exercise of his government, he absorbed all the powers of the state. “By the subversion.” says

Ramsay, "of every trace of the popular government, without any proper civil establishment in its place, he, with a few co-adjutors, assumed and exercised legislative, judicial and executive powers over citizens in the same manner as over the common soldiery." He was prompt to anger, obdurate in punishment, frivolous in his exactions, and bloated with the false consequences of a position which he had reached through meanness and exercised without dignity. Feared and hated by his inferiors, despised by his equals, and loved by few, if any, he was yet one of that fortunate class of persons whom an inordinate but accommodating self-esteem happily assures and satisfies in every situation. Gratifying his favorite passions at every step in his progress, he probably found no reason to regret the loss of affections that he had never learned to value and never cared to win. Utterly selfish, his mind had nevertheless never risen to the appreciation of those better treasures of life and of the heart which the noble nature learns to prize beyond all others, as by a natural instinct. His sympathies were those only of the sensual temperament. His desires were those of the voluptuary. He was an unmarried man, and his habits were those of any other gay Lothario of the army. The warm tints upon his cheek were significant of something more than vulgar health; and the liquid softness of his eye was indicative of habits such as were admitted not to be among the worst traits of that passionate Roman whose world was lost probably quite as much by wine as love. Balfour was not the person to forfeit *his* world through either of these passions, though he too freely and frequently indulged in both. He possessed yet others which Mark Antony does not seem to have shared, or not in large degree; and his avarice and lust of power were the rods, like those of Aaron, which kept all others in subjection. But we have lingered sufficiently long upon his portrait. Enough has been said and shown to furnish all the clews to his character. Let us now see to his performances.

In a short period after receiving his advices from Dorchester Balfour was prepared for business. His secretary was soon in attendance, and his aids were despatched in various quarters in search of the officers whom he had summoned to his morning

conference He occupied, as "Headquarters," that noble old mansion, still remaining in the lower part of King street, Charleston, known as number *eleven*. At that period it belonged to the estate of Miles Brewton. Subsequently, it became the property of Colonel William Allston, in whose family it still remains. But with Balfour as its tenant, the proprietorship might fairly be assumed to be wholly in himself; determinable only in the event, now scarcely anticipated by the invader, of the state ever being recovered by the arms of the Americans. With his secretary seated at the table, his pen rapidly coursing over the sheets under the diction of his superior, Balfour trod the apartment—the southeast chamber in the second story—in evident impatience. At times, he hurried to the front windows, which were all open, and looked forth, as any unusual sounds assailed his ears. Returning, he uttered sentence after sentence of instruction, and paused only to approach the sideboard and renew his draught of old Madeira, a bottle of which had been freshly opened before the secretary came. At length, to the relief of his impatience, the sound of a carriage was heard rolling to the door, and the soldier in attendance looked in to announce

"Colonel Cruden."

"Show him in," was the reply; and, the next moment, the person thus named made his appearance, and was welcomed in proper terms by the commandant, who, turning to the secretary, hastily examined what he had written, as hastily attached his seal and signature, and, in lower tones than was his wont, gave him instructions in what manner to dispose of the papers.

"Leave us now," said Balfour, "but be not far; I may need you shortly. No more sleep to-night; remember that. You may help yourself to some of the wine; it may assist you in sustaining your vigil."

The young man did not scruple to employ the privilege awarded him. He drank the wine, and, with a bow, retired.

"Let us drink, also, Cruden," was the speech of Balfour, the moment the youth had gone. "This early rising renders some stimulus necessary, particularly when the matter is as annoying as troublesome. Come, this Madeira is from the cellar of old

Laurens, some time president of Congress. He had a truer taste for Madeira than politics. There is no better to be found in all the city. Come."

"But what is this business which calls us up at this unseasonable hour?"

"Something in your way, I fancy. But first let me congratulate you on your appointment. As agent for sequestered estates, you should soon be a millionaire."

"There certainly ought to be good pickings where rebellion has been so fruitful," said the other.

"Surely; and in possession of the fine mansion of that premature rebel, Cotesworth Pinckney—decidedly the finest house in Carolina—you are already in the enjoyment of a pleasant foretaste of what must follow. The house, of course, will remain your own."

"I suppose so, if the state is not reconquered."

And have you any fears of this, after the defeat of that sentimental hero, Gates, at Camden? That affair seems to settle the question. These people are effectually crushed and cowed, and Congress can never raise another army. The militia of the Middle states and the south are by no means numerous, and they want everything as well as arms. The New-Englanders no longer take the field, now that the war has left their own borders; and, come what may, it is very clear that the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida, must still remain the colonies of Great Britain. In that event, a peace which even yields independence to the more northern provinces, will give nothing to these: and my faith in the *uti-posidetis* principle makes me quite easy with regard to my possessions."

And he looked round upon the pleasant apartment which he occupied with the air of a man perfectly satisfied with the architectural proportions of his building.

"I am glad to hear you in this pleasant vein. From your impatient summons, I had thought the devil was to pay."

"And so he is," said the commandant, suddenly becoming grave; "the devil to pay, indeed; and I am sorry to tell you that your kinsman, Proctor, is in danger of sharp censure, if not a loss of his commission."

“Ha!”

“He has nearly suffered the surprise of his post; suffered this malignant Walton to be snatched from his clutches on the way to execution, half of his men to be cut to pieces, and Dorchester burnt to ashes.”

“You confound me!”

“It is too true. There is his own despatch, which, of course, makes the best of it.”

He pointed to the table where lay a couple of letters with the seals both broken; and Cruden was about to place his hand on one of them, when his grasp was prevented, rather precipitately, by that of Balfour.

“Stay; that is not the despatch. Here it is,” giving the one letter, and carefully thrusting the other into his pocket. But Cruden had already seen the superscription, which bore the Dorchester stamp also. He made no comment, however, on the circumstance, and forbore all inquiry, while he proceeded to read the despatch of Major Proctor, to whom the post at Dorchester and the contiguous country had been confided.

“This is certainly a most unfortunate affair; but I do not see how Proctor is to blame. He seems to have done everything in his power.”

“That is to be seen. I hope so, for your sake no less than his. But it is a matter of too serious a kind not to demand keen and searching inquiry.”

“Proctor had no more than seventy men at the post. Cornwallis stripped him of all that could be spared; and more, it seems, than it was safe to spare.”

“My dear friend, you are just in the receipt of a handsome appointment from Cornwallis. How can you suppose, that he should err in a military calculation of this sort? How suppose that the king of Great Britain can be persuaded of his error at the very moment which brings him advices of so great a victory? It is impossible! Come, let us replenish;” and he again filled the glasses. Cruden drank, but deliberately; and while the goblet was yet unfinished, paused to say—

“I see, Balfour, my kinsman is to be sacrificed.”

“Nay, not so; we shall give him every opportunity of saving

himself. On my honor, he shall not be pressed to the wall. But you see for yourself that the affair is an unlucky one—a most unlucky one—just at this juncture.”

“And Proctor such a good fellow—really a noble fellow.”

“Admitted; and yet, between us, Cruden, he has been particularly unfortunate, I fear, in allowing his affections to be ensnared by the daughter of this very rebel, Walton; who is not without attractions, considering her vast estates. She is more than good-looking, I hear—indeed, Kitty Harvey tells me that she was quite a beauty a year ago. Moll is not willing to go so far, but says she was very good-looking. Now, these charms, in addition to some two or three hundred slaves, and a most baronial landed estate, have proved too much for your nephew; and the fear is that he has shown himself quite too indulgent—indeed, a little wilfully careless and remiss; and to this remissness the rebel owes his escape.”

“This is a very shocking suspicion, Balfour; and not to be reported or repeated without the best of testimony. John Proctor is one of the most honorable men living. There does not seem to have been any remissness. These partisans of Singleton were surely unexpected; and when Proctor sends out half of his disposable force to escort the rebel to execution, one would think he had furnished quite as large a guard as was requisite.”

“So, under ordinary circumstances, it would seem; and yet where would this party of rebels, though led by a notoriously daring fellow, find the audacity to attack such a guard within sight of the fortress, in midday, unless secretly conscious that the chances favored him in an extraordinary manner? Mind you, now, I say nothing of my own head. I give you only the conjectures, the mere whisperings of others, and beg you to believe that I keep my judgment in reserve for more conclusive evidence.”

“I don’t doubt that Proctor will acquit himself before any court. But have you any farther advices—no letters?”

“None that relate to this affair,” was the rather hesitating reply.

“And what is it, Balfour, for which you want me now?”

“A cast of your office, *mon ami*. I wish to afford you an op-

portunity of exercising yourself in your new vocation. You must accompany me to Dorchester this very day. Here is a memorandum of particulars. Take your secretary with you. The estates of this rebel Walton are to be sequestered. You shall take them in charge and administer them. Lands, negroes, house, furniture, man-servant and maid-servant, ox and ass, and such an equipage as you will scarcely find any where in the colonies. I am told that the Madeira in Walton's garrets is the oldest in the country. Remember, there must be a fair division of *that* spoil. I have not insisted upon your merits to Cornwallis to be denied my reward. Besides, the stud of this rebel is said to be a magnificent one. I know that Tarleton itched to find a plea for laying hands upon his blooded horses. We must share them also, Cruden. I am by no means satisfied with my stock, and must recruit and supply myself. There are two or three hundred negroes, an immense stock of plate, and a crop of rice just about to be harvested. You will be secure of most of this treasure, anyhow, even should you find an heir for it in your nephew."

This last sentence was said with a smile, which Cruden did not greatly relish. There was much in what Balfour had spoken to disquiet him as well as give him pleasure. Cruden, like the greater number of his fellow-soldiers, was anxious to spoil the Egyptians. His avarice was almost as blind and devouring as that of Balfour, and his love of show not less; but he had affections and sympathies, such as are grateful to humanity. He was proud of his nephew, whose generous and brave qualities had done honor to their connection; and he was not willing to see him sacrificed without an effort. This he clearly perceived was Balfour's present object. Why, he did not care to know. It was enough that he resolved to do what was in his power to defeat his purpose.

We need not follow the farther conference of these good companions. It was of a kind to interest themselves only. With the first glimpses of the gray dawning, Cruden took his departure to hasten his preparations for the contemplated journey; while Balfour, having given all his orders, threw himself upon a sofa, and soon slept as soundly as if he had only just retired for the night.

CHAPTER II.

SOCIAL STABBING.

THE blare of trumpets beneath his windows, announcing the readiness of his cavalry to march, found Balfour at the conclusion of a late breakfast. He was soon in the saddle, and accompanied by his friend Cruden, followed by some inferior officers. This party rode on slowly, while the major in command of the brigade proceeded on the march, drawing up only as they reached the great gate of the city. The stranger who at this day, shall find himself gazing upon the southern front of the stately pile, called the "Citadel," in Charleston—a building of the state, devoted to the purposes of military education—will stand at no great distance from what was then the main entrance to the city. Along this line ran the fortifications, extending from the river Cooper to the Ashley, and traversing very nearly what is now the boundary line between the corporate limits of Charleston and its very extensive suburb. At that early period, the fortifications of the place were at some distance from the settlement. The surface occupied by the city scarcely reached beyond a fourth of the present dimensions, and in the north and west, was distinguished only by some scattered and inferior habitations. "Up the path" was the phrase used by which to distinguish the region which had been assigned to the defences and beyond.

Without, the region lay partially in woods, broken only by an occasional farmstead and worm fence, which, when the British took possession of the "Neck" for the purpose of the leaguer, soon disappeared, either wholly or in part, beneath the fire and the axe. The gate of the city stood a little to the east of

King street—not quite midway, perhaps, between that and Meeting street. It was covered within by a strong *horn-work* of masonry, originally built by the besieged, and afterward improved by the enemy. It was a work of considerable strength in that day, fraised, picketed, and intended as a citadel. The British, after the fall of the city, greatly strengthened and increased these fortifications; though even in their hands, the lines remained what are called field-works only.

Beyond them, at the moment when we request the reader's attention, were still perceptible the traces of the several footholds, taken by the enemy when the leaguer was in progress. You could see the *debris* of the redoubts, under the cover of which they had made their approaches; the several parallels—though thrown down in part, and the earth removed, with the view to strengthening the fortifications—still showing themselves upon the surface, and occasionally arresting the eye by an unbroken redoubt, or the mound which told where the mortar-battery had been erected. Farms and fences had been destroyed, trees had been cut down for pickets and abbatis; and even that noble avenue, leading from the city, called the "Broadway," which old Archdale tells us was "so delightful a road and walk of a great breadth, so pleasantly green, that I believe no prince in Europe, by all their art, can make so pleasant a sight for the whole year," even this had been shorn of many of its noblest patriarchs, of oak and cedar, for the commonest purposes of fuel or defence. It was still an avenue, however, to compel the admiration of the European. All was not lost of its ample foliage, its green umbrage, its tall pines, fresh and verdant cedars, and ancient gnarled oaks: and, as the splendidly uniformed cavalry of the British, two hundred in number, filed away beneath its pleasant thickets, the spectacle was one of a beauty most unique, and might well persuade the spectator into a partial forgetfulness of the fearful trade which these gallant troopers carried on. On each hand, from this nearly central point, might glimpses be had of the two rivers, scarce a mile asunder; beneath which, on the most gradual slope of plane, the city of Charleston rises, the Ashley on the west, the Cooper on the east, both navigable for a small distance—streams of ample breadth, if not

of depth; and in fact rather arms of the sea than arteries of the land.

The British detachment, about to leave the garrison, its objects not known, nor its destination, was necessarily a subject of considerable interest to all parties. Whig and loyalist equally regarded its movements with curiosity and excitement. The recent defeat of the Americans at Camden; the sudden and startling event, so near at hand, in the rescue at Dorchester, and the partial conflagration of that hamlet, were all now known among the citizens. The question with the one party was that of the dethroned sovereign of England on the ominous appearance of Gloster, "What bloody scene hath Roscius now to act?"—while the other looked forward to new progresses, ending in the acquisition of fresh spoils from new confiscations, and the punishment of enemies whom they had learned to hate in due degree with the appreciation of their virtuous patriotism, which persevered, under all privations, in a manly resistance to the invader. Groups of these, of both parties, separated naturally by their mutual antipathies, had assembled in the open space contiguous to the citadel, and were now anxiously contemplating the spectacle. Among these, scattered at plays that had an earnest signification, were dozens of sturdy urchins, already divided into parties according to the influence of their parental and other associations. These, known as the "Bay Boys" and the "Green Boys," were playing at soldiers, well armed with cornstalks, and hammering away at each other, in charging and retreating squadrons. The "Bay Boys" were all loyalists, the "Green Boys" the Whigs, or patriots: and in their respective designations, we have no inadequate suggestion of the influences which operated to divide the factions of their elders in the city. The "Bay Boys" represented the commercial influence, which, being chiefly in the hands of foreigners, acknowledged a more natural sympathy with Britain than the "Green Boys," or those of the suburban population, most of whom were the agricultural aristocracy of the low country, and with whom the revolutionary movement in Carolina had its origin.

The appearance of Balfour and his suite dispersed these parties who retired upon opposite sides, leaving a free passage for the

horses, which were driven forward with but small regard for the safety of the crowds that covered the highway. The men turned away with as much promptitude as the boys; neither Whig nor loyalist having much assurance of consideration from a ruler so arrogant and capricious as Balfour, and so reckless of the comfort of inferiors. A few women might be seen, as if in waiting, mostly in gig or chair—then the most commonly used vehicle—though one or more might be seen in carriages, and a few on horseback, followed by negro servants. Those were all prepared to leave the city, on brief visits, as was customary, to the neighboring farms and plantations along one or other of the two rivers. They were destined to disappointment, Balfour sternly denying the usual permit to depart from the city, at a moment when there was reason to suppose that stray bodies of Marion's parties were lurking in the neighborhood. The precaution was a proper one; but there was no grace or delicacy in the manner of Balfour's denial.

"Get home, madam," was the rude reply to one lady, who addressed him from the window of her carriage; "and be grateful for the security which the arms of his majesty afford you within the walls of the city. We will see after your estates."

"My concern is, sir, that you will prove yourself only too provident," answered the high-spirited woman, as she bade her coachman wheel about to return.

"There is no breaking down the spirit of this people," muttered Balfour to Cruden as they rode forward. "That woman always gives me the last word, and it is never an unspiced one."

"They who lose the soup may well be permitted to enjoy the pepper," said Cruden. "It ruffles you, which it should not."

"They shall bend or break before I am done with them," answered the other. To the major commanding in his absence, he gave strict injunctions that no one should be allowed to leave the city under any pretence.

"Unless General Williamson, I suppose?" was the inquiry, in return.

"Has he desired to go forth to-day?"

"To-morrow, sir."

"Well, let him be an exception." and he rode off; "though"

—continuing, as if speaking to himself—“were he wise, he should hug the city walls as his only security. His neck would run a sorry chance were he to fall into the hands of his ancient comrades.”

“I do not see that his desertion of the enemy has done us much service,” was the remark of Cruden.

“You mistake: his correspondence has been most efficient. He has brought over numbers in Ninety-Six and along the Congarees. But these are matters that we can not publish.”

At the “Quarter’s House,” between five and six miles, the party came to a halt. This was a famous place in that day for parties from the city. The long low building, still occupying the spot, might be almost esteemed a *fac-simile* of the one which covered it then. It received its name, as it was the officers’ quarters for the old field range contiguous, which is still known as “Izard’s Camp.” It was now a region devoted to festivity rather than war. Hither the British officers, of an afternoon, drove out their favorite damsels. Here they gamed and drank with their comrades; and occasionally a grand hop shook the rude log foundations of the fabric, while the rafters gleamed with the blaze of cressets, flaming up from open oil vessels of tin. Though not yet midday, Balfour halted here to procure refreshments; and Mother Graddock, by whom the place was kept, was required to use her best skill—which was far from mean in this department of art—in compounding for her sensual customer a royal noggin of milk punch; old Jamaica rum being the potent element which the milk was vainly expected to subdue. A lounge of half an hour in the ample piazza, and the party resumed their route, following after the march of the brigade at a smart canter. A ride of four hours brought them to Dorchester, where, apprised of their approach, the garrison was drawn out to receive them.

The spectacle that met the eyes of Balfour, in the smoking ruins of the village, was well calculated to impress him with a serious sense of the necessity of a thorough investigation into the affair. He shook his head with great gravity as he said to Cruden—

“It will be well if your kinsman can acquit himself of the responsibility of this affair. Proctor is a good officer; is quick,

sensible, and brave; but I fear, Cruden, I very much fear, that he has been somewhat remiss in this business. And then the awkward relations which are said to have existed between this rebel's daughter and himself——”

“Stay,” said Cruden; “he approaches.”

The next moment, Major Proctor joined the party, and offered the proper welcome. He was a young man, not more than twenty-eight or thirty in appearance; and more than ordinarily youthful to have arrived at the rank which he held in the service. But he had been fortunate in his opportunities for distinction; and, both in the conquest of New York and of Charleston, had won the special applause of his superiors for equal bravery and intelligence. His person was cast in a very noble mould. He was tall, erect, and graceful, with a countenance finely expressive; lofty brow, large and animated eyes; and features which, but for a stern compression of the lips, might have appeared effeminately handsome. At this time, his face was marked by an appropriate gravity. He conducted his visitors through the village, pointing out the scene of every important transaction with dignity and calmness. But his words were as few as possible; and every reference to the subject, naturally so painful, was influenced chiefly by considerations of duty to his superior.

When his examination of the field was ended, they made their way toward the fortress, at the entrance of which they found an officer in waiting, to whom Balfour spoke rather eagerly, and in accents much less stately than those which he employed in dealing with subordinates. Captain Vaughan—for such was the name and title of this officer—met the eye of Proctor at this moment, and did not fail to observe the dark scowl which overshadowed it. A sudden gleam of intelligence, which did not seem without its triumph, lighted up his own eyes as he beheld it; and his lip curled with a smile barely perceptible to a single one of the party. Balfour just then called the young officer forward, and they passed through the portals of the fortress together. Proctor motioned his kinsman Cruden forward also, but the latter, twitching him by the sleeve, held him back as he eagerly asked the question in a whisper—

"For God's sake, John, what is all this? How are you to blame?"

"Only for having an enemy, uncle, I suppose."

"An enemy? I thought so. But who?"

Proctor simply waved his hand forward in the direction of Vaughan, whose retiring form was still to be seen following close behind Balfour.

"You will soon see."

"Vaughan! But how can he hurt you? Why should he be your enemy?"

"I am in his way somewhat; and—but not now, uncle. Let us go forward."

They were soon all assembled in Proctor's quarters, where dinner was in progress. Balfour had already renewed his draughts, enjoying with a relish, the old Jamaica, of which a portly square bottle stood before him. His beverage now was taken without the milk; but was qualified with a rather small allowance of cool water. The conversation was only casual. It was tacitly understood that, for the present, the subject most in the mind of all parties was to be left for future discussion. Proctor did the honors with ease and grace, yet with a gravity of aspect that lacked little of severity. Captains Vaughan and Dickson were of the company—officers both belonging to the station—and Cruden contrived to examine, at intervals, the features of the former, of whom he knew but little, with the scrutiny of one who had an interest in fathoming the character of him he surveyed. But Vaughan's face was one of those inscrutable ones—a dark fountain, which shows its surface only, and nothing of its depths. He was not unaware of Cruden's watch—that circumspect old soldier, with all his shrewdness and experience, being no sort of match for the person, seemingly a mere boy, small of features, slight of figure, and with a chin that appeared quite too smooth to demand the reaping of a razor—whom he sought to fathom. Yet those girlish features, that pale face, and thin, effeminate, and closed lips, were the unrevealing representatives of an intense ambition, coupled with a cool, deliberate, almost icy temper, which seldom betrayed impatience, and never any of its secrets. His eyes smiled only, not his lips, as he noted the furtive scrutiny which Cruden maintained

At length, dinner was announced, and discussed. Balfour was at home at table. He was a person to do the honors for the *bon vivant*; and here, perhaps, lay some of the secret of his influence with Sir William Howe. Fish from the Ashley, which glided beneath the walls of the fortress, and venison from the forests which spread away on every hand within bowshot, formed the chief dishes of the feast; and the Jamaica proved an excellent appetizer and provocative. Wines were not wanting; and the commandant of Charleston very soon showed symptoms which acknowledged their influence. Before the cloth had been removed, his forbearance was forgotten; and, rather abruptly, the affair of Walton's rescue was brought upon the table.

"I'll tell you what, Proctor, this affair is decidedly unfortunate. Here you have seventy-six men in garrison, good men, not including invalids, and you send out a detachment of thirty only to escort this rebel Walton to the gallows. I must say, you might almost have expected what followed."

"Really, Colonel Balfour, I see not that. I send out half of my force, or nearly so, to superintend the execution of a single man. One would suppose such a force sufficient for such a purpose. Was I to abandon the garrison entirely? Had I done so, what might have been the consequences? Instead of the mere rescue of the prisoner, the post might have been surprised and captured with all its stores, and the garrison cut to pieces."

"Scarcely, if the reported force of the rebels be true. They do not seem to have had more than twenty men in all."

"You will permit me to ask, sir, how you arrived at this conclusion? I am not conscious of having made any definite report of the number of the rebels in this assault."

"No, Major Proctor; and this, I am sorry to observe, is a most unaccountable omission in your report. You had the evidence of a worthy loyalist, named Blonay, who distinctly told you that they numbered only twenty men."

"The deficiencies of my report, Colonel Balfour, seem to have been particularly supplied by other hands," was the ironical remark of Proctor, his eye glancing fiercely at Vaughan as he spoke; "but your informant is scarcely correct himself, sir, and has been too glad to assume, as a certainty, a report which was only

conjectural. Blonay stated distinctly that there were twenty men *and more*. These were his very words. He did not say how many. His whole account was wretchedly confused, since his mind seems to have been distracted between the difficulty of rescuing his mother from the feet of the horse, by which she was really trampled to death, and the desire of taking revenge upon a single enemy, upon whom alone his eyes seem to have been fixed during the affair. This Blonay, sir, instead of being a worthy loyalist, is a miserable wretch, half Indian, and of no worth at all. He has an Indian passion for revenge, which, on this occasion, left him singularly incapable of a correct observation on any subject which did not involve the accomplishment of his passion. But, allowing that the rebels made their assault with but twenty men, it must be remembered that they effected a surprise——”

“Ah! that was the reproach, Major Proctor; there was the error, in allowing that surprise.”

“But, Balfour,” said Cruden, “this seems to be quite unreasonable. A detachment of thirty men from the post, leaving but forty in charge of it, seems to be quite large enough.”

“That depends wholly on circumstances, Cruden,” was the reply of Balfour, filling his glass.

“Exactly, sir,” resumed Proctor; “and these circumstances were such as to call for a guard for the prisoner no stronger than that which I assigned it. But a few days had elapsed since Earl Cornwallis totally defeated the rebel army at Camden. Were we to look for an effort of the rebels, in his rear, of this description? Did we not know that Marion, with his brigade, had joined himself to the force of Gates; and had we not every reason to suppose that he had shared its fate? The whole country was in our possession. Lord Rawdon held Camden; Colonel Stuart was at Ninety-Six; Orangeburg, Motte’s, Watson’s, Monk’s Corner, Quimby—all posts garrisoned by ourselves; and our scouts brought no tidings of any considerable force of rebels embodied in any quarter.”

“But the *inconsiderable*,” answered Balfour.

“They were surely provided against in a force of thirty men, led by a competent officer, who sealed his devotion with his life”

“Why did you not take command of the escort yourself?” queried Balfour.

For a moment, an expression of strong disgust spread over the face of Proctor. But he replied, calmly—

“It might be a sufficient answer to say, that such was not my duty. The command of the post at Dorchester involved no obligation to assume the duties of a subordinate. But I will express myself more frankly. I could not have assumed this duty without violating some of the most precious feelings of humanity. I had enjoyed the hospitality of Colonel Walton; had shared his intimacy; and cherished a real esteem for the noble virtues of that gentleman, which his subsequent unhappy rebellion can not obliterate from my mind. I could not have taken part in the terrible event of that day, I preferred, sir, as my duty allowed it, to withdraw from so painful a spectacle.”

“Ah! that was the error—the great error. The soldier, sir, has obligations to his king superior to those of mere sentiment. I am sorry, Major Proctor—very sorry—not less for your sake, than because of the deep sympathy which I have with my friend, Cruden.”

“But, Balfour,” said Cruden, “it strikes me that John’s course has been quite justifiable. With his force, he could not have detached from the garrison more than he did, as an escort for the rebel’s execution. And, under the circumstances of the country, with Cornwallis so completely triumphant over Gates, and with our troops everywhere overawing every conspicuous point, there could be no reason to anticipate such a surprise as this. Now”—

“My dear Cruden, all this sounds very well; and were these things to be considered by themselves I have no doubt the defence would be properly urged. But I am afraid that an evil construction may be placed upon the deep sympathy which our young friend seems to have felt for the family of this rebel. He seems to have been a frequent visiter at Walton’s plantation.”

“Only, sir, when Colonel Walton was understood to be a friend of my king and government.”

“That he never was.”

“He was admitted in our roll of friends among the people of

the country ; and I have Lord Cornwallis's especial instructions to treat him with great courtesy and favor, in the hope of winning him over to active participation in our cause."

"Very true, sir ; that *was* our object ; but how long is it since this hope was abandoned ? Could you have entertained it, my dear major, for a moment after your fruitless attempt to capture Singleton, the lieutenant of Marion, harbored by this very rebel — nay, rescued by Walton from your grasp, at the head of an armed force, which put you at defiance ? Nay, I am not sure that the curious fact, that Walton suffered you to escape, though clearly in his clutches, will not make against you. Even since these events, it is understood that you have more than once visited the daughter of this rebel, alone, without any attendants, returning late in the evening to your post."

Proctor smiled grimly, as he replied —

"It will be something new, I fancy, to the officers of his majesty in Charleston and elsewhere, if it be construed into a treasonable affair when they visit a rebel damsel. But really, Colonel Balfour, this conversation assumes so much the appearance of a criminal investigation, that I see no other course before me than to regard it as a sort of court of inquiry. Perhaps, sir, I had better tender my sword, as under arrest. At all events, sir, permit me to demand a court of inquiry for the full examination of this affair."

He unbuckled his sword as he spoke, and laid it upon the table.

"What are you about, John ? What need of this ?" demanded Cruden. "I am sure that Balfour means nothing of the kind."

"Perhaps it is just as well, Cruden," answered Balfour, "that our young friend should so determine. I like to see young men fearless of investigation. Better he should invite the court than have it forced upon him ; and you will see, from what I have said, that there is much of a suspicious nature in this affair which it is proper for him to clear up. But remember, my friends, what I have said has been said in a friendly spirit. I have too much regard for both of you to suffer you to be taken by surprise. You now see what points are to be explained, and what doubts discussed and settled."

This was all said very coolly ; we shall not say civilly.

"I am deeply indebted to your courtesy, Colonel Balfour," answered Proctor, "and will be glad if you will still further increase my acknowledgments, by suffering me to know the sources of that information which, I perceive, has followed my footsteps as a shadow."

"Nay, now, my young friend, you must really excuse me. I should be happy to oblige you; but the nature of the affair, and the caution which is due to my situation, will not suffer me to comply with your desires. Excuse me. Let us have a glass all round."

"Stay," said Cruden; "am I to understand that John is deprived of his command at this post?"

"Most certainly," interposed Proctor, himself. "Until purged of these suspicions, I can certainly hold no station of trust in the service of his majesty."

"Your nephew has a right notion of these matters, Cruden," remarked Balfour; "but it will not be long. He will soon purge himself of these suspicions, and be in a situation to resume all his trusts."

"And to whom," said Cruden, "will you confide the post, meanwhile?"

"Who?—ay!" looking round. "I had thought of requesting our young friend, Vaughan, here, to administer its duties, and to take charge of the precincts of Dorchester."

Vaughan bowed his head quietly and respectfully, and in a few calmly-expressed words, declared his sense of the compliment. The keen eye of Proctor was fastened upon him with a stern and scornful glance, and, a moment after he left the apartment, followed by his uncle.

"This is a most abominable affair, John," was his remark; "a most abominable affair!"

"Do you think so, sir? There would be nothing abominable about it, were there not a villain in the business."

"And that villain—"

"Is Vaughan! the servile tool of Balfour; the miserable sycophant, who fancies that ambition may be served by falsehood. But I shall crush him yet. His triumph is for the moment only."

CHAPTER III

NATIVE PRINCESS.

THE sun was still an hour high when Balfour gave instructions to prepare his horses and a small escort, proposing a visit to the plantation called "The Oaks," the domain of the famous rebel, Colonel Walton.

"You will, of course accompany me, Cruden. Your duties begin in this quarter. It is just as well that we should have this estate within our clutches as soon as possible, and before the alarm is taken. We will quarter ourselves upon the young lady to-night, and see how the land lies. Should she prove as beautiful as they describe, we shall make her a ward of the king, and dispose of her accordingly."

"In that event, you had best take her to the city."

"I shall most surely do so."

"I shall certainly be better pleased to take charge of the plantation in her absence. Our authority might otherwise, conflict. With the dawn, we must proceed to gather up the negroes, and for this purpose I shall need your assistance. You will have a sufficient detachment with you?"

"Twenty men will do. There are some three hundred slaves, I understand of all classes; and the fewer soldiers we employ in bringing these into the fold, the less heavy will be the assessment on the estate."

This was said with a grin, the meaning of which was perfectly understood by his associate.

"Does my nephew accompany us, Balfour?"

"If he chooses."

"I may need his assistance in the matter."

"You have brought your secretary?"

“Yes; but John is a ready fellow at accounts—as quick with the pen as with the sword;—besides, he knows something of the estate already, and may give some useful hints in respect to plate, horses, and other property, which these rebel women are apt to conceal.”

“The plate generally finds its way into the cellar, or under some great oak-tree in the woods; but I have long been in possession of a divining rod, which conducts me directly to the place of safe-keeping. We have only to string up one of the old family negroes, and, with a tight knot under the left ear, and a little uneasiness in breathing, he soon disgorges all his secrets. But, in truth, these women seldom hide very deeply. It is usually at the very last hour that they consent to put away the plate, and then it is rather hurried out of sight than hidden. I have sometimes detected the hoard by the ears of a silver milk-pot, or the mouth of a coffee-urn, or the handle of a vase, sticking up unnaturally beside an old chimney in the basement. But see your nephew, and let us ride.”

Cruden proceeded to Proctor's room; but, on the expression of his wish, was met by a firm and prompt refusal.

“How can you ask me, Colonel Cruden, to take part in this business? It is your duty, as the proper officer of the crown, and that is *your* apology. I should have none.”

“I am afraid, John, you are quite too deeply interested in this beauty.”

“Stop, sir; let us have nothing of this. Enough, that Miss Walton can never be to me more than she is. She is one always to command my respect, and I beg that she will yours. For my sake, sir, administer this unpleasant duty, upon which you go, with all possible tenderness and forbearance.”

“I will, John, for your sake. To be sure I will.”

And they separated—Balfour clamoring without, impatiently, for his companion, who soon after joined him. An easy ride of an hour brought them to the noble avenue, “The Oaks,” which conducted, for half a mile, to the entrance of Colonel Walton's dwelling—a stately, sombre wood—the great, venerable trees arching and uniting completely over the space between, while their bearded mosses drooped to the very ground itself. The

be supposed, in one of her sex, to flow from their recognition. Her schooling had already been one of many trials and terrors. Her guests knew something of the training through which she had gone, and this rendered her bearing still more admirable in their sight. But her beauty, her virtue, her dignity, and character did not suffice, after the first impressive effect produced by her appearance, to disarm her chief visiter of any of his purposes. The usual preliminaries of conversation—such common-places of remark as belong to the ordinary encounters of persons in good society—having been interchanged as usual, and Balfour seized the opportunity of a pause, when his fair hostess, indeed, appeared to expect something from him in the way of a revelation, to break ground in regard to the ungracious business on which he came.

“It would greatly relieve me, Miss Walton,” said he, with a manner at once seemingly frank as seemingly difficult, “if I could persuade myself that you, in some degree, anticipate the painful affair which brings me to your dwelling.”

“That it is painful, sir, I must feel; and, without being able to conjecture what will be the form of your business, I can easily conceive it to be such as can be agreeable to none of the parties. To me, at least, sir, and to mine, I can very well conjecture that you bring penalty and privation at least.”

“Nay, nay! These, I trust, are not the words which should be used in this business. In carrying out the orders of my superior, and in prosecuting the service which is due to my sovereign, I shall certainly be compelled to proceed in a manner materially to change your present mode of life; but that this will involve penalty and privation is very far from probable. The conduct of your father—his present attitude in utter defiance to the arms and authority of his majesty, and in total rejection of all the gracious overtures made to him, as well by Earl Cornwallis as by Sir Henry Clinton, leaves it impossible that we should extend to him any indulgence. As a rebel in arms—”

“Stay, sir!—you speak of my father. It is not necessary that you should say anything to his daughter’s ear, save what is absolutely necessary that she should know. If I conceive

rightly your object in this visit, it is to visit upon my father's property the penalty of my father's offence."

"'Pon my soul," whispered Cruden, "the girl speaks like a very Portia. She comes to the point manfully."

"You relieve me, Miss Walton; and, in some measure, you are correct," answered Balfour, interrupting her speech. "It could not be supposed that his majesty should suffer Colonel Walton to remain in possession of his property, while actually waging war against the British standard. Colonel Cruden, here, is commissioned by Lord Cornwallis to sequester his estates—their future disposal to depend wholly upon the final issues of the war."

Here Cruden interposed, by reciting the general terms of the British regulation in regard to the confiscated or sequestered estates of the rebels—enumerating all the heads of the enactment, and proceeding to details which left no doubt unsatisfied, no ambiguity which could lead to doubt, of the universal liability of the estate of the offender. Lands, houses, slaves; furniture and horses; plate and jewelry—"Of course, Miss Walton, the personal ornaments of a lady would be respected, and"—

Katharine Walton smiled quietly. This smile had its explanation, when the commissioner commenced his operations next day—but, though he was very far from conjecturing its signification, it yet struck him as something mysterious. Balfour, also, was impressed with the smile of Katharine, which seemed quite unnatural under the circumstances.

"You smile, Miss Walton."

"Only, perhaps, because one who anticipates the worst needs no such details as Colonel Cruden has bestowed on me. You are the masters here, I know. For myself, you see I wear no jewels. I had some toys, such as rings, brooches, chains, and watches, but I thought it unseemly that I should wear such ornaments, when the soldiers of my people wanted bread and blankets, and they all found their way, long since, to the money-chest of Marion."

"The devil!" muttered Cruden, in tones almost audible, though meant as an aside to Balfour. "It is to be hoped that the family plate has not taken the same direction."

mansion was in a style of massive grandeur to correspond with so noble an entrance. The approach of the British party was known to the inmates, even before it had entered upon the avenue. These inmates consisted, now, only of Colonel Walton's maiden sister, Miss Barbara—a lady of that certain age which is considered the most uncertain in the calendar—when, in fact, the spinster ceases to compute, even as she ceases to grow—and Katharine, the only daughter of the fugitive rebel himself. Katharine was still a belle and a beauty, and youthful accordingly. She might have been nineteen; and, but for the majestic and admirable form, the lofty grace of her carriage, the calm and assured expression of her features, the ease and dignity of her bearing—the fresh sweetness of her face, and the free, luxuriant flow of her long, ungathered locks, simply parted from her forehead, and left at freedom upon her neck and shoulders—would have occasioned a doubt whether she was quite sixteen. An obsequious negro, who rejoiced in the name of Bacchus, without making any such exhibition of feature or conduct as would induce the suspicion that he was a worshipper at the shrine of that jolly divinity, received the British officers at the entrance, and ushered them into the great hall of the mansion. Their escort, having had previous instructions, was divided into two bodies, one occupying the front avenue, the other that which led to the river, in the rear of the building. But two persons entered the house with Balfour and Cruden—Captain Dickson, of the garrison, and one who knew the Walton family, and the secretary of Colonel Cruden.

It was not long before the ladies made their appearance. Though by no means disposed to waive any proper reserves of the sex, they were yet prepared to recognise the policy which counselled them to give no undue or unnecessary provocations to those to whose power they could offer no adequate resistance. Mrs. Barbara Walton—the old maid in those days being always a *mistress*, through a courtesy that could no longer regard her as a *miss*—led the way into the hall, dressed in her stateliest manner, with a great hoop surrounding her as a sort of *chevaux de frize*—a purely unnecessary defence in the present instance—and her head surmounted by one of those towers of

silk, gauzes, ribands, and pasteboard, which were so fashionable in that day, and which reminded one of nothing more aptly than of the rude engravings of the Tower of Babel in old copies of the Bible, done in the very infancy of art. Poor Mrs. Barbara was a tame, good-natured creature, nowise decided in her character, upon whom a foolish fashion could do no mischief, but who was always playing the very mischief with the fashions. They never were more military in character than in her hands—leading to conquest only by the absolute repulsion of all assailants. Whether, at forty-five, this good creature fancied that it was necessary to put her defences in the best possible array against such a notorious gallant as Balfour, we may not say; but certainly she never looked more formidable on any previous occasion. Her very smiles were trenches and pitfalls for the invader—and every motion of her person, however gracefully intended, seemed like a “warning to quit”—with a significant hint of “steel traps and spring guns” in waiting for trespassers.

Doubtless, the venerable maiden might have largely compelled the consideration of the British officers, but for the bright creature that appeared immediately behind her; and who, without any appearance of timidity or doubt, quietly advanced and welcomed the strangers, as if performing the most familiar office in the world. Balfour absolutely recoiled as he beheld her. So bright a vision had not often flashed across his eyes.

“By Jove,” he muttered at the first opportunity, to Cruden, “she *is* a beauty! What a figure!—what a face! No wonder your kinsman neglected his duties for his love.”

—“It is yet to be seen that he has done so,” was the grave aside of Cruden.

“Having seen her,” whispered Balfour, “I can believe it without further testimony.”

We need not follow these asides. Katharine did the honors of the reception with an ease and dignity, which, while making the visitors at home, made it sufficiently evident that she felt quite as much what was due to her condition as to their claims. She wore the appearance of one who was conscious of all the cares, the responsibilities, and the dangers of her situation; yet without yielding to any of the fears or weaknesses which might

"We shall see at supper, perhaps," was the whisper of Balfour.

Katharine Walton was seen again to smile. She had possibly heard the apprehensions of Cruden. At least, she might reasonably have conjectured them. She resumed—

"And now, Colonel Balfour, that I am in possession of your determination, you will permit me to retire for awhile, in order that I may properly perform the duties of a hostess. For this night, at all events, I may reasonably be expected to act in this capacity, let to-morrow bring forth what it may."

"Stay—a moment, Miss Walton—I am not sure that you conceive all that we would say—all, in fact, that is appointed us to execute."

"Well, sir?"

"Lord Cornwallis has left it to my discretion to decide whether, as a ward of the crown, you should be left exposed to a dangerous propinquity with rebellion—whether, in short, it would not be advisable that one so lovely, and so worthy of his guardianship, should not be placed in safety within the walls of the city."

"Ha! that, indeed, is something that I had not anticipated. And this, sir, is left to your individual discretion?"

"It is, indeed, Miss Walton," replied the commandant, turning his eyes very tenderly upon hers, and throwing into his glance as much softness as could well consist with the leer of a satyr.

"Well, sir, I suppose that even this claim can challenge nothing but submission. As I have said already, you are the master here."

She retired with these words.

"'Pon my soul, Cruden, the girl is a princess. With what a grace she yields! She seems nowise stubborn; and so beautiful! It ought not to be very difficult to thaw the heart of such a woman. That she has not been won before, is because they have never suffered her to come to the city."

"But, by ——, should the plate have followed the jewels, Balfour?"

"The question is a serious one. We shall see at supper. Your kinsman might have said something of this matter, if he

pleased. He must have seen, in his frequent visits, whether any display of plate was made."

"He did not visit frequently," said Cruden.

"Ah! but he did; too frequently for his good;—but here comes that gentlemanly negro; Bacchus, they call him. Such a name seems particularly suited to a butler. I think, Cruden, you had better send him to me. I like the fellow's manners. He has evidently been trained by a gentleman. Well, my man?"

"My lady begs to tell you, gentlemen, that supper waits."

"Very well—show the way. Did you hear that, Cruden?—my lady! How these Provincials do ape nobility!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE RANGER.

THE business of the feast had scarcely been begun, when it was interrupted by a heavy tread without, as of more than one iron-shod person; and, the door being thrown open by Bacchus, a dull-faced lieutenant, having charge of the escort of Balfour, showed himself at the entrance, and begged a hearing.

“What’s the matter, Fergusson? Can’t it keep till after supper?” was the somewhat impatient speech of Balfour.

He was answered by a strange voice; and a little bustle followed, in which a person, totally unexpected, made his appearance upon the scene. The stranger’s entrance caused the commandant’s eyes to roll in some astonishment, and occasioned no small surprise in all the assembly. He was a tall young man, of goodly person, perhaps twenty-eight or thirty years of age, but habited in a costume not often seen in the lower country. He wore one of those hunting-shirts, of plain blue homespun, fringed with green, such as denoted the mountain ranger. A green scarf was wrapped about his waist, with a belt or baldric of black, from which depended a very genteel cut-and-thrust. On his shoulder was an epaulette of green fringe also; and he carried in his hand, plucked from his brows as he entered the apartment, a cap of fur, in which shone a large gay button; behind which may have been worn a plume, though it carried none at present. The costume betrayed a captain of loyalist riflemen, from the interior, and was instantly recognised as such by the British officer. But the stranger left them in no long surprise. Advancing to the table, with the ease of a man who

had been familiar with good society in his own region all his life, yet with a *brusqueness* of manner which showed an equal freedom from the restraints of city life, he bowed respectfully to the ladies, and then addressed himself directly to Balfour.

“Colonel Balfour, I reckon?”

“You are right, sir; I am Colonel Balfour.”

“Well, colonel, I’m right glad I met you here. It may save me a journey to the city, and I’m too much in a hurry to get back to lose any time if I can help it. I’m Captain Furness, of the True Blue Rifles, of whom, I reckon, you’ve heard before. I’ve ridden mighty hard to get to you, and hope to get the business done as soon as may be, that I come after. Here’s a letter from Colonel Tarleton. I reckon you hain’t heard the news of the mischief that’s happened above?”

“What mischief?”

“You’ve heard, I reckon, that Lord Cornwallis gave Saratoga Gates all blazes at Rugely’s Mills?”

“Yes, yes; we know all that.”

“Well, but I reckon you don’t know that just when Cornwallis was putting it to Gates in one quarter, hard-riding Tom was giving us ginger in another?”

“And who is hard-riding Tom?”

“Why, Tom Sumter, to be sure—the game-cock, as they sometimes call him; and, sure enough, he’s got cause enough to crow for a season now.”

“And what has he been doing above?”

“Well, he and Tom Taylor broke into Colonel Carey’s quarters, at Camden Ferry, and broke him up, root and branch, killing and capturing all hands.”

“Ha! indeed! Carey?”

“Yes. And that isn’t all. No sooner had he done that than he sets an ambush for all the supplies that you sent up for the army; breaks out from the thicket upon the convoy, kills and captures the escort to a man, and snaps up the whole detachment, bag and baggage, stores, arms, spirits, making off with a matter of three hundred prisoners.”

“The devil! Forty wagons, as I live! And why are you here?”

“Me? Read the letter, Colonel. Lord Cornwallis has sent Tarleton after Sumter, and both have gone off at dead speed; but Tarleton has sent me down to you with my lord’s letter and his own, and they want fresh supplies sent after them as fast as the thing can be done. I’m wanting some sixty-five rifles, and as many butcher-knives, for my own troop, and a few pistols for the mounted men. Colonel Tarleton told me you would furnish all.”

Balfour leaned his chin upon both hands, and looked vacantly around him, deeply immersed in thought. At the pause in the dialogue which followed, Katharine Walton asked the stranger if he would not join the party at the supper-table. He fastened a keen, quick, searching glance upon her features; their eyes met; but the intelligence which flashed out from his met no answering voice in hers. He answered her civilities gracefully, and, frankly accepting them, proceeded to place himself at the table—a seat having been furnished him, at the upper end, and very near to her own. Balfour scowled upon the stranger as he beheld this arrangement; but the latter did not perceive the frown upon the brow of his superior. He had soon finished a cup of the warm beverage put before him; and, as if apologizing for so soon calling for a fresh supply, he observed, while passing up his cup—

“I’ve ridden mighty far to-day, miss, and I’m as thirsty as an Indian. Besides, if you *could* make the next cup a shade stronger, I think I should like it better. We rangers are used to the smallest possible quantity of water, in the matter of our drinks.”

“The impudent backwoodsman!” was the muttered remark of Balfour to Cruden, only inaudible to the rest of the company. The scowl which covered his brow as he spoke, and the evident disgust with which he turned away his eyes, did not escape those of the Ranger; and a merry twinkle lighted upon his own as he looked in the direction of the fair hostess, and handed up his cup. Had Balfour watched him a little more closely, it is possible that he might have remarked something in his manner of performing this trifling office which would have afforded new cause of provocation. The hand of the Ranger lingered near

the cup until a ring, which had previously been loosened upon his little finger, was dropped adroitly beside the saucer, and beyond all eyes but hers for whom it was intended. Katharine instantly covered the tiny but sparkling messenger beneath her hands. She knew it well. A sudden flush warmed her cheek; and, trusting herself with a single glance only at the stranger, he saw that he was recognised.

CHAPTER V.

LESSONS IN MANNERS.

THE evening repast, in the good old times, was not one of your empty shows, such as it appears at present. It consisted of goodly solids of several descriptions. Meats shared the place with delicacies; and tea or coffee was the adjunct to such grave personages as Sir Loin, Baron Beef, and Viscount Venison. Balfour and Cruden were both strongly prepossessed in favor of all titled dignitaries, and they remained in goodly communion with such as these for a longer period than would seem reasonable now to yield to a supper-table. Captain Dickson naturally followed the example of his superiors; and our loyalist leader, Furness, if he did not declare the same tastes and sympathies in general, attested, on this occasion, the sharpness of an appetite which had been mortified by unbroken denial throughout the day. But the moment at length came which offered a reasonable pretext to the ladies for leaving the table. The guests no longer appealed to the fair hostess for replenished cups; and, giving the signal to her excellent, but frigid and stately aunt, Mrs. Barbara, Katharine Walton rose, and the gentlemen made a like movement. She approached Colonel Balfour as she did so, and laid the keys of the house before him.

"These, sir, I may as well place at once in your keeping. It will satisfy you that I recognise you as the future master here. I submit to your authority. The servant, Bacchus, will obey your orders, and furnish what you may require. The wines and liquors are in that sideboard, of which you have the keys. Good-night, sir; good-night, gentlemen."

The ease, grace, and dignity, with which this communication

was made surprised Balfour into something like silence. He could barely make an awkward bow and a brief acknowledgment as she left the apartment, closely followed by her aunt. The gentlemen were left to themselves: while Bacchus, at a modest distance, stood in respectful attendance.

"By my life," said Cruden, "the girl carries herself like a queen. She knows how to behave, certainly. She knows what is expected of her."

"She *is* a queen," replied Balfour, with quite a burst of enthusiasm. "I only wish that she were mine. It would make me feel like a prince, indeed. I should get myself crowned King of Dorchester, and my ships should have the exclusive privilege of Ashley river. 'The Oaks' should be my winter retreat from the cares of royalty, and my summer palace should be at the junction of the two rivers in Charleston. I should have a principality—small, it is true; but snug, compact, and with larger revenues, and a territory no less ample than many of the German princes."

"Beware!" said Cruden half seriously. "You may be brought up for *lèse-majesté*."

"Pshaw! we are only speaking a vain jest, and in the presence of friends," was the reply of Balfour, glancing obliquely at Captain Furness. The latter was amusing himself, meanwhile, by balancing his teaspoon upon the rim of his cup. A slight smile played upon his mouth as he listened to the conversation in which he did not seem to desire to partake. Following the eye of Balfour, which watched the loyalist curiously, the glance of Cruden was arrested rather by the occupation than the looks of that person. His mode of amusing himself with the spoon was suggestive of an entirely new train of thought to the commissioner of sequestrated estates.

"By the way, Balfour, this looks very suspicious. Do you observe?"

"What looks suspicious?"

"Do you remember the subject of which we spoke before supper?—the plate of this rebel Walton? It was understood to be a singularly-extensive collection—rich, various, and highly valuable. You remark none of it here—nothing but a neg.

garly collection of old spoons. The coffee-pot is tin or pewter; the tea-service, milk-pot, and all, of common ware. I am afraid the plate has followed the jewels of the young lady, and found its way into the swamps of Marion."

A scowl gathered upon the brow of Balfour, as he glanced rapidly over the table. The next moment, without answering Cruden, he turned to Bacchus, who stood in waiting with a face the most inexpressive, and said—

"Take the keys, Cupid, and get out some of the best wines. You have some old Jamaica, have you not?"

The reply was affirmative.

"See that a bottle of it is in readiness. Let the sugar-bowl remain, and keep a kettle of water on the fire. This done, you may leave the room, but remain within call."

He was promptly obeyed. The conversation flagged meanwhile. Cruden felt himself rebuked, and remained modestly silent, but not the less moody on the subject which had occasioned his remark. Balfour referred to it soon after the disappearance of Bacchus.

"It is as you say, Cruden; there is certainly no display before us of the precious metals. I had really not observed the absence of them before. In truth, everything was so neatly arranged and so appropriate, that I could fancy no deficiencies. Besides, my eyes were satisfied to look only in one direction. The girl absorbed all my admiration. That she has not herself gone into the camp of Marion, is my consolation. I shall compound with you cheerfully. You shall have the plate, all that you may find, and the damsel comes to me."

The cheeks of the loyalist captain, had they caught the glance, at that moment, of the commandant of Charleston, would have betrayed a peculiar interest in the subject of which he spoke. They reddened even to his forehead and the spoon slid from his fingers into the cup. But he said nothing, and the suffusion passed from his face unnoticed.

"I am afraid than you would get the best of the bargain. But it may be that the plate is still in the establishment. It would scarcely be brought out on ordinary occasions."

"Ordinary occasions! Our visit an ordinary occasion!" ex-

claimed Balfour. "Lay not that flattering unction to your soul, my good fellow. These Carolinians never allow such occasions to escape them of making a display. The ostentation of the race would spread every available vessel of silver at the entrance of stranger guests of our rank. Nothing would be wanting to make them glorious in our eyes, and prompt us to proper gratitude in theirs. They would certainly crowd sideboard and supper-table with all the plate in the establishment."

"Ay, *were* we guests, Balfour; but that were no policy, if we came as enemies. Would they tempt cupidity by ostentatious exhibitions of silver? Scarcely! They would be more apt to hide away."

"As if they knew not that we are as good at seek as they at hide! No, no, my dear fellow; I am afraid that your first conjecture is the right one. If the woman gives her jewels, it is probable that the plate went before. But we shall see in season. Meanwhile, I am for some of the rebel's old Madeira. Come, Captain Furness, let us drink confusion to the enemy."

"Agreed, sir," was the ready answer. "I am always willing for that I am willing to spoil the Egyptians in any way. But to see how you do things here below, makes one's mouth water. We have mighty little chance in our parts, for doing ourselves much good when we pop into an enemy's cupboard. There's monstrous small supply of silver plate and good liquor in our country. The cleaning out of a rebel's closet in 'Ninety-Six' won't give more than a teaspoon round to the officers of a squad like mine; and the profits hardly enough to reconcile one to taking the pap-spoon out of a baby's jaws, even to run into Spanish dollars. But here, in these rich parts, you have such glorious pickings, that I should like greatly to be put on service here."

"Pickings!" exclaimed Balfour, lifting his eyes, and surveying the loyalist from head to foot, as he held the untasted goblet suspended before his lips — "pickings! Why, sir, you speak as if the officers honored with the commission of his majesty, could possibly stoop to the miserable practice of sharing selfishly the confiscated possessions of these rebels."

"To be sure, colonel; that's what I suppose. Isn't it so, then?" demanded the loyalist, not a whit abashed.

"My good sir, be a little wiser ; do not speak so rashly. Let me enlighten you."

"Pray do : I'll thank you, colonel."

"To distress the enemy, to deprive them of the means to be mischievous, alone causes the sequestration of their goods and chattels. These goods and chattels must be taken care of. It may be that these rebels will make proper submission hereafter, will make amends for past errors by future service ; and, in such cases, will be admitted to his majesty's favor and receive their possessions at his hands again, subject only to such drawbacks as flow necessarily from the expense of taking care of the property, commissions on farming it, and unavoidable waste. These commissions are generally derived from mere movables, silver and gold, plate and jewels, which, as they might be lost, are at once appropriated, and the estate credited with the appropriation against the cost and trouble of taking care of it. That the officers in his majesty's commission should employ this plate, is simply that his majesty's service may be sufficiently honored and may command due respect. Selfish motives have no share in the transaction. We have no 'pickings,' sir—none! *Appropriations*, indeed, are made ; but, as you see, solely for the equal benefit of the property itself, the service in which we are engaged, and the honor of his majesty. Do you comprehend me, my young friend ?"

"Perfectly, sir ; perfectly. I see. Nothing can be clearer."

"Do not use that vulgar phrase again, I pray you, in the hearing of any of his majesty's representatives. 'Pickings' may do among our loyalist natives. We do not deny them the small privileges of which you have spoken. You have emptied in your experience, I understand, some good wives' cupboards in Ninety-Six. You have grown wealthier in tea and pap-spoons. It is right enough. The laborer is worthy of his hire. These are the gifts with which his majesty permits his loyal servants to reward themselves. But, even in your case, my young friend, the less you say about the matter the better. Remember, always, that what is appropriated, is in the name, and, consequently, for the uses of his majesty. But no more 'pickings,' if you love me."

An air of delicate horror always accompanied the use of the offensive phrase. The loyalist captain professed many regrets at the errors of his ignorance.

“I see, I see; ‘appropriations’ is the word, not ‘pickings.’ There is a good deal in the distinction, which did not occur to me before. In fact, I only use the phrase which is common to us in the up country. Our people know no better; and I am half inclined to think that, were I to insist upon ‘appropriations,’ instead of ‘pickings,’ they would still be mulish enough to swear that they meant the same thing.”

Balfour turned an inquisitive glance upon the speaker; but there was nothing in his face to render his remark equivocal. It seemed really to flow from an innocent inexperience, which never dreamed of the covert sneer in his answer. He tossed off his wine as he finished, and once more resumed his seat at the table. So did Cruden. Not so, Balfour. With his arms behind him, after a fashion which Napoleon, in subsequent periods, has made famous, if not graceful, our commandant proceeded to pace the apartment, carrying on an occasional conversation with Cruden, and, at intervals, subjecting Furness to a sort of inquisitorial process.

“What did you see, Captain Furness, in your route from the Congarees? Did you meet any of our people? or did you hear anything of Marion’s?”

“Not much, colonel; but I had a mighty narrow escape from a smart squad, well-mounted, under Major Singleton. From what I could hear, they were the same fellows that have been kicking up a dust in these parts.”

“Ha! did you meet them?” demanded Cruden. “How many were there?”

“I reckon there may have been thirty or thirty-five—perhaps forty all told.”

“You hear?” said Cruden.

“Yes, yes!” rather impatiently was the reply of Balfour. “But how knew you that they were Singleton’s men?”

“Well it so happened that I got a glimpse of them down the road, while I was covered by the brush. I pushed into the woods out of sight, as they went by, and found myself suddenly

upon a man, a poor devil enough, who was looking for a hiding-place as well as myself. He knew all about them; knew what they had been after, and heard what they had done. His name was Cammer; he was a Dutchman, out of the Forks of Edisto."

"What route did they pursue?"

"Up the road, pushing for the east, I reckon."

"And you want rifles and sabres, eh?"

"And a few pistols, colonel."

"Do you suppose that you have much work before you, after this annihilation of Gates at Camden?"

"Well, I reckon there was no annihilation, exactly. The lads run too fast for that. They are gathering again, so they report, pretty thick in North Carolina, and are showing themselves stronger than ever in our up-country. The fact is, colonel, though Lord Cornwallis has given Gates a most famous drubbing, it isn't quite sufficient to cool the rebels. The first scare, after you took the city, is rather wearing off; and the more they get used to the sound of musket bullets, the less they seem to care about them. The truth is, your British soldiers don't know much about the use of the gun, as a shooting iron. They haven't got the sure sight of our native woodsmen. They are great at the push of the bayonet, and drive everything before them: but at long shot, the rebels only laugh at them."

"Laugh, do they?"

"That they do, colonel, and our people know it; and though they run fast enough from the bayonet, yet it's but reasonable they should do so, as they have nothing but the rifle to push against it. If they had muskets with bayonets, I do think they'd soon get conceited enough to stand a little longer, and try at the charge too, if they saw a clever opportunity."

"That's your opinion, is it?"

"Not mine only, but his lordship, himself, says so. I heard him, with my own ears, though it made Colonel Tarleton laugh."

"And well he might laugh! Stand the bayonet against British soldiers. I wonder that his lordship should flatter the scoundrels with any such absurd opinion."

“Well now, colonel, with due regard to your better judgment, I don't see that there's anything so very absurd in it. Our people come of the same breed with the English, and if they had a British training, I reckon they'd show themselves quite as much men as the best. Now, I'm a native born American myself, and I *think* I'm just as little likely to be scared by a bayonet as any man I know. I'm not used to the weapon, I allow; but give me time and practice, so as to get my hand in, and I warrant you, I'd not be the first to say 'Back out, boys, a hard time's coming.' People fight more or less bravely, as they fight with their eyes open, knowing all the facts, on ground that they're accustomed to, and having a weapon that's familiar to the hand. The rifle is pretty much the weapon for our people. It belongs, I may say, to a well-wooded country. But take it away from them altogether, and train them every day with musket and bayonet, with the feel of their neighbor's elbow all the while, and see what you can make of them in six months or so.”

“My good friend, Furness, it is quite to your honor that you think well of the capacities of your countrymen. It will be of service to you, when you come to confront our king's enemies in battle; but you are still a very young man—”

“Thirty-two, if I'm a day, colonel.”

“Young in experience, my friend, if not in years. When you see and hear more of the world, you will learn that the bayonet is the decreed and appointed weapon for a British soldier over all nations. He may be said to be born to it. It was certainly made for him. No people have stood him with it, and take my word for it no people will.”

“Unless, as I was saying, a people of the same breed—a tough, steady people, such as ours—that can stand hard knocks, and never skulk 'em when they know they're coming. I've seen our people fight, and they fight well, once they begin—”

“As at Camden.”

“There they didn't fight at all; but there was reason—”

“Let us take a glass of wine together, Captain Furness. I feel sure that you will fight well when the time comes. Meanwhile, let us drink. Come, Cruden, you seem drowsing. Up with you, man. Our rebel, Walton, had a proper relish for

Madeira. This is as old as any in the country. What would they say to such a bottle in England?"

"What! can't they get it there?" demanded the loyalist captain, with an air of unaffected wonderment.

"No, indeed, Furness. You have the climate for it. You see, you have yet to live and learn. Our royal master, George the Third, has no such glass of wine in his cellar. Come, fill, Cruden, shall I drink without you?"

"I'm with you! Give us a sentiment."

"Well! Here's to my Altamira, the lovely Katharine Walton; may she soon take up arms with her sovereign! Hey! You don't drink my toast, Captain Furness?"

"I finished my glass before you gave it, colonel."

"Fill again! and pledge me! You have no objections to my sentiment?"

"None at all! It don't interfere with a single wish of mine. I don't know much about the young lady; but I certainly wish, in her case, as in that of all other unmarried young women, that she may soon find her proper sovereign."

"I see you take me. Ha! ha! You are keen, sir, keen. I certainly entertain that ambition. If I can't be master over Dorchester and the Ashley, at all events, I shall aim to acquire the sovereignty over her. Cruden, my boy, you may have the ancient lady—the aunt. She is a gem, believe me—from the antique! Nay, don't look so wretched and disgusted. She is an heiress in her own right, has lands and negroes, my friend, enough to make you happy for life."

"No more of that, Nesbitt. The matter is quite too serious for jest."

"Pshaw! drink! and forget your troubles. Your head is now running on that plate. What if 'it is gone, there are the lands, the negroes, and a crop just harvesting—some nine hundred barrels of rice, they tell me!"

A sly expression passed over the features of the loyalist captain, as Balfour enumerated the goods and chattels still liable to the grasp of the sequestrator; but he said nothing. Balfour now approached him, and putting on an air of determined business, remarked abruptly—

“So, Captain Furness, you desire to go with me to Charleston for arms?”

“No, indeed, colonel; and that’s a matter I wish to speak about. I wish the arms, but do not wish to go to Charleston for them, as I hear you’ve got the small-pox and yellow fever in that place.”

“Pshaw! They never trouble genteel people, who live decently and drink old Madeira.”

“But a poor captain of loyalists don’t often get a chance, colonel, of feeding on old Madeira.”

“Feeding on it! By Jove, I like the phrase! It is appropriate to good living. One might fatten on such stuff as this without any other diet, and defy fever and the ague. Afraid of small-pox? Why, Captain Furness, a good soldier is afraid of nothing.”

“Nothing, colonel, that he can fight against, to be sure; but dealing with an enemy whom you can’t cudgel, is to stand a mighty bad chance of ever getting the victory. We folks of the back country have a monstrous great dread of small-pox. That was the reason they could get so few of the people to go down to Charleston when you came against it. They could have mustered three thousand more men, if it hadn’t been for that.”

“It’s well they didn’t. But there’s no need of your going to the city if you don’t wish it. You can stay here with Cruden, or in Dorchester, till I send on the wagons.”

“That’ll do me, exactly; and now, colonel, if you have no objections, I’ll find my way to a sleeping place. I’ve had a hard ride of it to-day—more than forty-five miles—and I feel it in all my bones.”

“We can spare you. Ho, there!—Jupiter!—Cupid!”

“Bacchus, I think they call him,” said the loyalist.

“Ay! How should I forget when the Madeira is before us. Come, sir, captain, let us take the night-cap; one, at least. I mean to see these bottles under the table before I leave it.”

Furness declined; and, at that moment Bacchus made his appearance.

“Find a chamber for this gentleman,” said the commandant;

and, bidding the British officers good night, Furness left the apartment under the guidance of the negro. When they had emerged into the passage-way, the loyalist captain, to the great surprise of the former, put his hand familiarly upon his shoulder, and in subdued tones, said—

“Bacchus, do you not know me?”

The fellow started and exclaimed—

“Mass Robert, is it you?—and you not afeard?”

“Hush, Bacchus; not a word, but in a whisper. Where am I to sleep?”

“In the blue room, sir.”

“Very good: let us go thither. After that, return to these gentlemen, and keep an eye on them.”

“But you’re going to see young missis?”

“Yes; but I must do it cautiously.”

“And you a’n’t afeard to come here! Perhaps you got your people with you, and will make a smash among these red-coats?”

“No. But we must say as little as possible. Go forward, and I will tell you further what is to be done.”

The negro conducted the supposed loyalist—passing through the passage almost to its extremity, and thence ascending a flight of steps to the upper story. Here another passage, corresponding in part with that below, opened upon them, which, in turn, opened upon another avenue conducting to wings of the building. In one of these was the chamber assigned to Furness. To this they were proceeding, when a door of one of the apartments of the main building was seen to open. The loyalist paused, and, in a whisper, said—

“Go, Bacchus, to my chamber with the light. Cover it when you get there, so that it will not be seen by the soldiers from without. Meanwhile, I will speak to your mistress.”

The negro disappeared, and Katharine Walton in the next moment, joined the stranger.

“Oh, Robert, how can you so venture? Why put your head into the very jaws of the lion?”

“Let us follow this passage, Kate. We shall be more secure Balfour and his companions sleep in the chamber below, I suppose?”

“Yes.”

“Come, then, and I will try to satisfy all your doubts, and quiet all your fears.”

And the speaker folded his arms tenderly about the waist of the maiden, as he led her forward through a passage that seemed equally familiar to both the parties.

CHAPTER VI.

LOVE PASSAGES.

“AND now, Robert,” said Katharine Walton, “tell me the reason of this rashness. Why will you so peril yourself, and at a moment when the memory of that dark and terrible scene in which you rescued my father from a base and cruel death still fills my eyes and heart? What do you expect here? What would you do?—which prompts you to incur this danger?”

“Ah, Kate,” replied her companion, fondly clasping her to his bosom, “were it not a sufficient answer to boast that my coming provokes such a sweet and tender interest in you? The gentle concern which warms the bosom of the beloved one is surely motive enough to stimulate the adventure of a soldier; and I find a consolation from all toils and perils, I assure you, in a moment of meeting and satisfaction so precious as this. If you will censure my rashness, at least give credit to my fondness.

“Do I not, Robert? And is not this further proof of your attachment, added to so many, which I never can forget, as dear to me as any hope or treasure that I own? But there is some other motive, I am sure, for your presence now. I know that you are not the person, at a season when your services are so necessary to the country, to bestow any time even upon your best affections, which might better be employed elsewhere. Surely, there is a cause which brings you into the snares of our enemies, of a nature to justify this rashness.”

“There is—there is, dear Kate; and you are only right in supposing that, precious as it is to me to enjoy your presence, and clasp you in fond embrace, even this pleasure could not have beguiled me now from the duties of the camp.”

"But how have you deceived these people?"

"How did I deceive you, Kate? You did not see through my disguise; you who know me so well, any more than Balfour and Cruden, to whom I am so utterly unknown."

"True—true; and yet, that I did not detect you, may be owing to the fact that I scarcely noted your entrance or appearance. I took for granted that you were one of the enemy, and gave you scarce a look. When I knew you, I wondered that I had been deceived for a moment. Had I not been absorbed by my own anxieties, and prepossessed against your appearance, I should have seen through your disguise without an effort."

"Yet Bacchus knew me as little as yourself."

"For the same reasons, doubtless. But what is the history of this disguise, Robert? And is there a real Captain Furness?"

"There is. We surprised him yesterday on his way to the city, and soon after I had separated from your father. His letters and papers suggested the deception; and I did not scruple to employ the contents of his saddle-bags in making my appearance correspond with his. We are not unlike in size, and there is something of a likeness in the face between us. A *ruse de guerre* of considerable importance depends upon my successful prosecution of the imposture. We shall procure a supply of arms and ammunition, which is greatly wanted in camp; and possibly effect some other objects, which I need not detail to you."

"But the peril, Robert."

"You have become strangely timid and apprehensive, Kate, all on a sudden. Once you would have welcomed any peril, for yourself as well as me, which promised glorious results in war or stratagem. Now—"

"Alas! Robert, the last few days have served to show me that I am but a woman. The danger from which you saved my father brought out all my weakness. I believe that I have great and unusual strength for one of my sex; but I feel a shrinking at the heart, now, that satisfies me how idly before were all my sense and appreciation of the great perils to which our people are exposed. Robert, dear Robert, if you love me, forego this adventure. You surely do not mean to visit the city?"

"Not if I can help it. The small-pox furnishes a good excuse, which Balfour is prepared to acknowledge. But heed not me. At all events, entertain no apprehension. I am not so unprepared for danger as you think. I have a pretty little squad in the Cypress, and can summon them to my side in an hour. True, they are not equal to any open effort against such a force as is now at Dorchester. But let Balfour disappear, and your father but get the recruits that he expects, and we shall warm the old tabby walls for them with a vengeance."

"Whither has my father gone?"

"To the southward—along the Edisto. He may probably range as far as the Savannah. He has ten of my followers with him, which straitens me somewhat. But for this, I had been tempted to have dashed in among these rascals here, and taken off the commandant of Charleston, with his mercenary commissioner of sequestration. If you only had heard their discussion upon the division of your plate and jewels! the heasts!"

"You must have laughed, surely?"

"Knowing, as I did, to what market the plate and jewels went, it was certainly hard to keep from laughing outright."

"Alas! Robert, this reminds me that the evil so long anticipated, has come at last. You hear that I am to be dispossessed. 'The Oaks' must know a new proprietor, and the servants—that is the worst thought—they will be scattered; they will be dragged off to the city, and made to work at the fortifications, and finally shipped to the West Indies."

"I can laugh at them there too, Kate;" and her companion could not entirely suppress a chuckle.

"How?"

"Never mind; better that you should know nothing. You will know all in the morning."

"Can it be that you have got the negroes off, Robert?"

"Ah! you will suffer me to have no secrets. They will all be off before daylight. Many of them are already snug in the Cypress, and a few days will find them safe beyond the Santee. The house servants alone are left, and such of the others as our British customers will be scarcely persuaded to take. Our venerable 'Daddy Bram' is here still, with his wool whiter than the

moss; and Scipio, who was an old man, according to his own showing, in the Old French War; and Dinah, who is the Mrs. Methusaleh of all the Ashley, and a dozen others of the same class. Balfour's face will be quite a study as he makes the discovery. But this is not all. We have taken off the entire stud—every horse, plough, draught, or saddle, that was of any service, leaving you the carriage horses only, and a few broken-down hackneys."

"This must have been done last night?"

"Partly; but some of it this very day, and while Balfour was dawdling and drinking at Dorchester."

"Were you then here last night, Robert?"

"Ay, Kate, and with an eye upon you as well as your interests. You had a visiter from Dorchester, Kate."

"Yes; Major Proctor, he came in the afternoon—

"And is disgraced for coming! Your charms have been too much for him. It is already over Dorchester that he has been superseded in his command for neglect of duty, and is to be court-martialed for the affair of your father's rescue."

"Ah! I am truly sorry for him! He was an amiable and courteous gentleman, though an enemy."

"What! would you make me jealous? Am I to be told that he is a fine-looking fellow also—nay, positively handsome?"

"And what is it to me?"

"No woman, Kate, thinks ill of a man for loving her—no sensible woman, at least; and pity is so near akin to love, that the very disgraces that threaten this gentleman make me a little dubious about his visits."

"He will probably pay no more."

"What! do you mean to say, Kate, that you have given him reason to despair?"

"No, Robert, not so"—with a blush which remained unseen—"but this disgrace of his removes him from Dorchester, and carries him to Charleston—"

"Whither you go also?"

"Not if I can help it."

"Why, what do you propose to do?"

"To fly with you to the Santee, if I can not remain here."

“Impossible, Kate! Who is to receive you on the Santee? Was it not thence that my poor sister hurried to find refuge with you in the last moments of her precious life? Our plantation was harried, and our dwellings burnt by the tories, before I sent her hither. Besides, how would you escape hence—how travel, if you did succeed in making your escape—and in what security would you live in a region over which the ploughshare of war will probably pass and repass for many weary months?”

“And do you counsel me to go to the city—to place myself in the custody of these mercenaries?”

“You are in their custody now. You can do no better. The city is, at all events, secure from assault. Were the French to help us with an efficient fleet, and could our army be rallied under an efficient general, we might do something against it; but of this there is little present prospect. The same degree of security could attend you nowhere else in the South at present. Our war must be a Fabian war—irregular, predatory, and eccentric in regard to the region in which it will prevail. No, Kate, however much I would rejoice to bear you away with me, even as the knight of olden time carried off his mistress from the very castle of her tyrant sire, I love you too much to make such an attempt now, when I know not whither I could bear you to place you in even partial security.”

“The mountains of North Carolina?”

“But how get there? We cannot hope that you should travel as we are constrained to do; for days without food; riding sometimes day and night to elude the enemy, or to find friends: with neither rest, nor food, nor certainty of any kind, and with the constant prospect of doing battle with an enemy as reckless and more faithless than the savage. You must submit, Kate, with the best possible grace, to the necessity which we can not conquer.”

A deep sigh answered him.

“You sigh, Kate; but what the need? Apart from the security which the city affords, and which was always doubtful here, you will find yourself in the enjoyment of society, of luxuries, gay scenes, and glorious spectacles; the ball, the rout, the revel, the parade—”

“Robert Singleton!” was the reproachful exclamation. It was a moody moment with our hero, such as will sometimes deform the surface of the noblest character, as a rough gust will deface the gentle beauties of the most transparent water.

“You will achieve new conquests, Kate. Your old suitor, Proctor, will be again at your feet; you will be honored with the special attentions of that inimitable *petit maître*, the gallant Harry Barry;* ‘Mad Campbell’ and ‘Fool Campbell,’† who, in spite of their nicknames, are such favorites with the tory ladies, will attach themselves to your train; and you will almost forget, in the brilliancy of your court, the simple forester, whose suit will then, perhaps, appear almost presumptuous in your sight.”

“I have not deserved this, Robert Singleton.”

“You have not, dearest Kate; and I am but a perverse devil thus to disquiet you with suspicions that have really no place within my own bosom. Forgive something to a peevishness that springs from anxiety, and represents toil, vexation, disappointment, and unremitting labors, rather than the thought that always esteems you, and the heart that is never so blessed as when it gives you all its love. It is seldom that I do you injustice; never, dearest cousin, believe me when I think of you *alone*, and separate from all other human considerations. It is then, indeed, that I love to think of you; and in thinking of you thus, Kate, it is easy to forget that the world has any other beings of worth or interest.”

“No more, Robert—no more.”

But, as she murmured these words, her head rested happily upon his bosom. With all around her apprehension and trouble, and all before her doubt, if not dismay, the moment was one of unmixed happiness. But she started suddenly from his fond embrace, and, in quick accents, resumed—

“I know not why it is, Robert, but my soul has been shrinking, as if within itself, under the most oppressive presentiments of evil. They haunt me at every turning. I can not shake off the feeling, that something crushing and dreadful is about to

* A small wit in the British garrison.

† Nicknames of well-known British officers in Charleston.

happen to me; and, since the decree of this commandant of Charleston, I associate all my fears with my visit to that city. This it is that makes me anxious to escape—to fly anywhere for refuge—even to the swamps of the Cypress; even to the mountains of North Carolina, making the journey, if you please, on horseback, and incurring all risks, all privations, rather than going to what seems *my fate* in Charleston. Tell me, Robert, is it not possible?"

"Do not think of it, Kate. It is *not* possible. I see the troubles, the dangers, the impossibilities of such an enterprise, as they can not occur to you. Dismiss these fears. This presentiment is the natural consequence of what you have undergone, the reaction from that intense and terrible excitement which you suffered in the affair at Dorchester. It will pass away in a few days, and you will again become the calm, the firm, the almost stoical spirit—certainly in endurance—which you have shown yourself already. In Charleston, your worst annoyance will be from the courtesies and gallantries of those you will despise. You will be dependent upon them for civilities, and will need to exercise all your forbearance. Balfour will be the master of your fortunes; but he will not presume to offend you. You will need to conciliate him, where you can—where it calls for no ungenial concessions. We have many friends in that city; and my venerable aunt, who is your kinswoman also, will support you by her steady sympathies and courageous patriotism. You will help to cheer some of our comrades who are in captivity. You will find full employment for *your* sympathies, and, in their exercise, gain solace. Fear nothing—be hopeful—our dark days will soon pass over."

"Be it so. And yet, Robert——"

"Stay! Hear you not a movement below?"

"The British officers retiring, perhaps. They sleep in chambers below, and will not come up stairs at all. Bacchus has his instructions."

"You were saying——"

"The case of my father, Robert——"

"Hush! My life! these feet are upon the stairs! What can it mean?"

“Heavens! there is no retreat to my chamber! The light ascends! Surely, surely, Bacchus can not have mistaken me! O, Robert, what is to be done? You can not cross to *your* chamber without being heard, nor I to mine without being seen!”

“Be calm, Kate. Let us retire as closely as possible into this recess. Have no fears. At the worst, see, I am armed with a deadly weapon that makes no noise!”

He grasped the hilt of a dagger, which he carried in his bosom: and they retired into a dark recess, or rather a minor avenue, leading between two small apartments into the balcony in the rear. Meanwhile the heavy steps of men—certainly those of Balfour and Cruden—were heard distinctly upon the stairs: while the voice of Bacchus, in tones somewhat elevated, was heard guiding them as he went forward with the light.

“Steps rather steep, gentlemen: have to be careful. This way, sir.”

“Why do you speak so loud, Hector? Do you wish to waken up the house? Would you disturb the young lady—the queen of Dorchester—my—my—I say, Cruden, come along, old fellow, and take care of your steps!”

Katharine trembled like a leaf. Robert Singleton—for such was his true name—put her behind him in the passage as far as possible, and placed himself in readiness for any issue. At the worst, there were but two of the enemy within the house; and our hero felt himself—occupying a certain vantage ground, as he did—more than a match for both. Let us leave the parties thus, while we retrace our steps, and return to the two whom we left fairly embarked on their carousals. Captain Dickson, it should not be forgotten, had gone back to Dorchester as soon as he had finished his supper.

CHAPTER VII.

CHOICE SPIRITS.

TO us, even now in the midst of a wonderful temperance reform, with Father Mathew in the land to second the great moral progress, and to make its claims at once impressive and religious, for the contemplation of succeeding time as for the benefit of our own, it will be difficult to conceive the excesses which prevailed in the use of ardent and vinous beverages in the days of which we write. They had harder heads, probably, in those days than in ours: they could drink with more audacity, and under fewer penalties, physical and moral, in their debauches. Certainly, they were then far less obnoxious to the censure of society for the licentious orgies in which it was the delight of all parties to indulge; and, indeed, society seldom interfered, unless, perhaps, to encourage the shocking practice, and to goad the young beginner to those brutal excesses from which the natural tastes might have revolted. "He was a milk-sop," in proverbial language, "who could not carry his bottle under his belt." "Milk for babes, but meat for men," the language of the apostle, was the ironical and scornful phrase which the veteran toper employed when encountering a more abstemious companion than himself. Precept and example thus combined, it was scarcely possible for the youth to withstand the pernicious training; and the terrible results have ensued to our period, and still measurably hold their ground, in practices which it will need the continued labors of a generation of reformers wholly to obliterate. To drink deep, as they did in Flanders, was quite a maxim with the soldiers of the Revolution on both sides; and too many of the American generals, taught

in the same school, were much more able to encounter their British adversaries over a bottle than in the trial and the storm of war. Scotch drinking was always as famous as Dutch or English. Indeed, it is, and has ever been, quite absurd to speak of the indulgence of the Irish as distinguishing them above their sister nations in a comparison of the relative degrees of excess which marked their several habits. The Scotch have always drunk *more* than the Irish; but they drank *habitually*, and were thus less liable to betray their excesses.

Balfour was a fair sample of his countrymen in this practice. He had one of those indomitable heads which preserve their balance in spite of their potations. A night of intoxication would scarcely show any of its effects in the morning, and certainly never operated to embarrass him in the execution of his daily business. His appearance usually would seldom warrant you in suspecting him of any extreme trespasses over his wine. He would be called, in the indulgent phrase, as well of that day as our own, a generous or free liver—one who relished his Madeira, and never suffered it to worst his tastes or his capacities. Such men usually pay the penalty in the end; but we need not look so far forward in the present instance. Enough for us that, with the departure of the ladies and the supposed loyalist, and Captain Dickson, the worthy commandant of Charleston determined to make a night of it. In this he was measurably seconded by his companion. Cruden, however, had a cooler head and a more temperate habit. Besides, he had a master passion, which sufficed to keep him watchful of his appetites, and to guard against the moment of excess. Still he drank. What officer of the army, in those days, did not drink, who had served three campaigns in America, after having had the training of one or more upon the continent of Europe?

“The wine improves, Cruden,” said Balfour. “I say, Mercury, how much of this wine have you in the cellar?”

“We don’t keep wine in the cellar, master,” replied the literal Bacchus, who showed himself at the entrance when summoned; “we keep it in the garret.”

“Well, well, no matter where. Have you got much of this wine in the garret?”

"A smart chance of it, I reckon, sir."

"What an answer! But this is always the case with a negro. A smart chance of it—as if one could understand anything from such an answer. Have you got a thousand bottles?"

"Don't think, sir."

"Five hundred?"

"Can't say, general."

"Five, then?"

"Oh, more than five—more than fifty, sir."

"Enough for to-night, then, at all events. Go and bring us a few more bottles. This begins to thicken. I say, Cruden, I can respect even a rebel who keeps good liquors. Such a person must always possess one or more of the essentials of a gentleman. He may not be perfectly well bred, it is true, for that depends as much on good society as upon good wines; but he shows that, under other circumstances, something might have been made of him. But why do you not drink? You neither drink nor talk. Finish that glass now, and tell me if you do not agree with me that the man deserves respect whose wines are unimpeachable."

"I can readily acknowledge the virtues which I inherit."

"Good—very good. It is a phrase to be remembered so long as the work of sequestration goes on with such happy results. But good fortune does not seem to agree with you. You are moody, Cruden."

"It is the effect of the Madeira. Wine always makes me so. I like it, perhaps, as well as anybody; but it sours me for a season. I become morose, harsh, ungenial——"

"What an effect! It is monstrous. It is only because you stop short where you should begin. 'Drink deep,' was the counsel of the little poet of Twickenham. That's the only secret. Do you read poetry, Cruden? I could swear no!"

"No, indeed, it appears to me great nonsense."

"It comes to me—the taste for it, I mean—always with my liquor. I never think of it at other periods. I would keep a poet myself, if I could find a proper one. Poor André did some rhyming for me once, but it went like a broken-winded hackney. Harry Barry has a sort of knack at versemaking; but it is

monstrous insipid, and only fit for his friend M'Mahon. 'Me and my friend M'Mahon!' 'Me and my friend Barry!' Are you not sick of the eternal speech of these two great-eared loobies, when they prattle of each other?"

"I never listen to them."

"You are right; but as I talk a great deal myself over my wine, I can't do less than listen to the brutes when I am sober."

"I say, Balfour, have you given any orders about the search of this place to-morrow? We should take it early."

"Oh, you are too impatient. Your avarice gets the better of you. Sufficient for the day is the plunder thereof. No cares to-night. Ha! Jupiter, you are there."

This was said to Bacchus, as he arranged half a dozen dusty bottles upon the sideboard.

"Draw one of those corks; put the bottle here; remove these skins, and prepare to answer."

He was obeyed.

"Now stand there, that we may have a good view of you. Your name is Brutus, you say?"

"Bacchus, master."

"Bacchus! Bacchus! Strange that I should always forget. Bacchus, you have a very beautiful young mistress."

The negro was silent.

"Do you not think so, fellow?"

"She always good to me, master."

"And that, you think, means the same thing. Well, we'll not dispute the matter. Now, Bacchus, do you think that your young mistress cares a copper for any of the young officers at Dorchester? Speak up, like a man."

"I don't know, general."

"You general me, you rascal! But you sha'n't *out-general* me. I tell you, you do know. Answer, sirrah—didn't they come here constantly after your young mistress? Wasn't that handsome fellow, Proctor, always here?"

"Balfour, Balfour," interposed Cruden, "do not forget, I beg you, that Proctor is my kinsman."

"Pshaw! Why will you be throwing your nephew constantly in my teeth? Isn't ours a common cause? Don't we stand or

fall together? And if your kinsman is in our way, sha'n't we thrust him out of it? What's he to either of us when the accounts are to be made up?"

"My sister's child, Balfour."

"Pish, were he your own now! Don't interrupt the negro. I say, Neptune, wouldn't you like to see your young mistress well married?"

"If she have no objection, master."

"A judicious answer! Well, she can have no objection, surely, to being married to a governor. Eh?"

"I reckon, master."

"She shall have a governor for her husband, Jupiter; she shall—and you shall be his body servant. I mean to be governor here, Pluto, as soon as we've driven all these rebels out; and she shall be my wife. Do you hear, fellow?"

"Yes, sir."

"You're a sensible fellow, Bacchus, and know that a governor's something more than a major of foot, or dragoons either. He makes majors of foot and dragoons—ay and unmakes them too, when they're troublesome. I say, Cruden, this affair looks squally for Proctor; it does; and yet I'm sorry for the fellow, I am. I like him as much on his account as your own. Come, we'll drink his health. You won't refuse that?"

Cruden filled his glass moodily and drank. Balfour proceeded—

"You think, Cruden, that I am talking with too much levity? Don't deny it. I see it in your face. You look as surly as Sir William, with the last touches from the tail of the gout—just beginning to be miserable. But, you shall see. I will conduct the rest of the good fellow's examination with due sobriety."

"If you have any more questions to ask, let him answer about the plate."

"Ay, to be sure; I meant to come to that. I see what troubles you. Ho, Pluto, your master was a gentleman; I know, from your manners. I can always tell a gentleman by his servants. They reflect his manners; they imitate them. That is to say, your master *was* a gentleman before he became a rebel. You are no longer his servant, and *you* continue a gentleman still. Your master was rich, eh?"

"I expect, sir."

"He had lands and negroes, and, I feel certain, kept good wines. Now, Plutus, among the qualities of a gentleman who is rich, he must be in possession of a famous service of plate; he must have urns of silver, punch-bowls, plates, vases, teapots, cream-pots, milk-pots, and a thousand things necessary to the table and the sideboard, made out of the bright metal, eh?"

"Yes, sir; I expect so."

"And, Juno, your master had them all, hadn't he?"

"O yes, sir."

"Where are they, Bacchus?" put in Cruden.

"I don't know, master."

"What? Well! Go on, Colonel Cruden, go on; if you are not satisfied with my—ah!—with my mode of—of—making this little domestic inquisition, why, you are at perfect liberty to—to do it better, if you can."

Cruden sullenly apologized, as he perceived that there was no propriety in doing otherwise.

"Go on, Balfour; I didn't mean to take the game out of your hands. No one could do it better."

"I flatter myself you're right, Colonel Cruden. I *do* think that I can—ah—examine this gentleman of a negro as—as—successfully as any gowned inquisitor of—of—Westminster. But you've put me out. I must have something stronger than Madeira to restore my memory. I say, Brutus—Bacchus—have you the water heated?"

"Yes, sir—general."

"And did your master—that was—did he have the decency, fellow, to keep in his cellar any good old Scotch whiskey?"

"I don't think, master; but there is some particular fine old Jamaica."

"There is? It will do. Jamaica is only an apology for old Scotch whiskey; but it is such an apology, Cruden—I say, Cruden, it is such an apology as any gentleman may accept. I must have some of it."

The bottle was already on the sideboard which contained the then favorite liquor of the South—Madeira being excepted always—and Bacchus was soon engaged in placing the spirits, the

sugars, and the boiling water under the hands of Balfour, who insisted upon uniting the adverse elements himself.

"How gloriously it fumes! There, Cruden; drink of that, old fellow, and bless the hand that made it. Bacchus, you shall have a draught yourself—you shall, you handsome old rascal—the better to be able—you hear—to answer my questions. There is much of this Jamaica?"

"Smart chance, general."

"Drink, fellow, and forget your old master in your new.

The negro showed some reluctance; and the commandant of Charleston, rising from his chair, seized the fellow by his wool with one hand, while he forced the huge goblet, with its smoking potation, into his mouth. Few negroes reject such a beverage, or any beverage containing spirits; and Bacchus, though a tolerably temperate fellow, swallowed the draught without much reluctance or suffering.

"And now for this plate, Cæsar?"

"Yes, sir."

"You say there was plate?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where was it kept?"

"In little room up stairs, sir."

"Have you the key to that room?"

"It's on the bunch, master."

"Show it me."

The negro pointed it out. Balfour grasped it firmly, and shook it free from the rest.

"And now, fellow, where's the key to your wine vaults—your cellar?"

"Garret, Bacchus?" interposed Cruden.

"I thank you, Colonel Cruden. But had you—I say, Cruden, in a moment more I should have used the word myself. *Garret*, fellow?"

"I left it in the door, master, last time I went up, thinking maybe you might want more of the Madeira."

"You did? You sensible fellow! Who shall say that a negro lacks forethought? Ah, Bacchus! you are the man for me. Come, Cruden, let us go."

“Whither? What do you mean?”

“To explore the wine-vaults—to look into the cellar—to see after the plate! Now or never. I must see the extent of our possessions, old boy, before I sleep to-night.”

The curiosity of Cruden—his cupidity, rather—prevailed over his sense of propriety. He was quite as ready for the exploration of the plate-room as was Balfour for the wine-cellar; and the two started, without further delay, under the guidance of Bacchus, bearing the candle. It was only when they emerged from the dining-room into the great passage-way below stairs, that our lovers above were first apprized of the danger in which they stood of discovery. The voice of Bacchus first told them of the probable intrusion of the British officers into a portion of the dwelling not assigned to them, and in which their presence, at that hour of the night, was totally unexpected.

The alarm of Katharine Walton may be imagined. Her fears, with regard to the safety of her companion, were naturally mixed up with the apprehensive sense of female delicacy, which must suffer from any detection under such circumstances. Singleton shared in this apprehension, with regard to her, more than any with regard to himself. He felt few fears of his personal safety, for he was conscious that he possessed, in the last resort, a means for escape, in the conviction that he could, himself, easily deal with the two enemies, encountering him, as they would, unexpectedly. To feel that his pistols were ready to his grasp in his belt, that the dagger was in his gripe and free for use, was to reassure himself, and to enable him, with composed nerves, to quiet those of his fair companion.

Meanwhile, the two Britons, both somewhat unsteady, though not equally so, made their way up the stairs. The anxiety of Bacchus to give due warning to those above, prompted him more frequently than seemed necessary to Balfour, to insist, in loud tones, upon the necessity of the greatest caution in ascending a flight of steps which, he repeated, were more than ordinarily steep.

“Hold on to the banister, general,” he cried, on seeing the commandant make a sweeping lurch against the wall; “these steps are mighty high and steep.”

"Shut up, fellow, and go ahead! Throw your light more behind you, that we may see the steepness. There, that will do. This is a large house, Cruden, eh? The proprietor contemplated a numerous progeny when he built. Solid, too: feel these banisters."

"All mahogany," was the answer.

"And carved. Old style, and magnificent. These provincials were ambitious of showing well, eh? An old house, eh? I say, Pluto, is this house haunted?"

"Haunted, master?"

"Yes, fellow. Don't you understand? Have you any ghosts about?"

"Why, yes, sir. The old lady walks, they say."

"What old lady?"

"The lady of the old landgrave."

"Landgrave?" exclaimed Cruden, inquiringly.

"Yes," answered Balfour. "You know that they had their nobles in this province: there were the landgravinoes, which is German for lord or baron, and their cassicoes, which is Indian for another sort of nobility; and their palatinos, which is a step higher than both, I'm thinking—a pretty little establishment for a court in the woods. It was a nice sort of fancy of Lord Shaftesbury, after whom they christened this river and its sister—Ashley and Cooper—and if the old fox hadn't had his hands full of other conceits, we might have had him here setting up as a sort of Prince Macklevelly, the Italian, on his own account."

All this was spoken as Balfour hung upon the banister, midway up the steps, steadying himself for a renewed effort, and balancing to and fro, with his eyes stretched upward to the dim heights of the lofty ceiling.

"Yes," said he, continuing the subject, "an old house, and a great one—not ill-planned for a palace; the family an old one, and of the nobility."

"An Indian nobility," said Cruden, somewhat contemptuously.

"Well, and why not? Nobility is nobility, whether savage or Saxon; and I'll marry into it when I can. Take my advice, and do the same. Is it not arranged between us that we are to divide the fair ladies of this establishment? I am to

have the young one, Cruden, old fellow—being more suited, you know, by reason of my youth and good-fellowship, to her tender years. The stately and magnificent aunt, Mistress Barbara, who has a right to the quarterings of her great grandsire, and is an heiress in her own right, they tell me—she is the very fellow for you, Cruden. You will make a famous couple. She will preside like a princess in your Pinckney chateau; and the royal ships, as they enter the harbor, will be always sure to give you a salute. Yes, I yield to you the aunt; I do, Cruden, old fellow, without grudging; and I will content myself modestly with the young creature.”

This was spoken at fits and starts, the tongue of our worthy commandant, by this time, having thickened considerably, to say nothing of frequent spasmodic impediments of speech, known as hiccoughs to the vulgar.

“You are disposed of in a somewhat summary manner, Kate,” whispered Singleton to his companion, both of whom had heard every syllable that was spoken.

“The brute!” was the muttered reply.

“What would Aunt Barbara say to all this?”

“If she be awake,” said Katharine, “she hears it all. It will greatly provoke her.”

“I can fancy her indignation! How she tosses her head!”

“Hush, Robert; they advance.”

“If we are to divide all our spoils, Balfour,” was the slow reply of Cruden, “upon the principle you lay down, my share would be a sorry one.”

“What! you won’t take the antique? Ha! ha! You go for tenderer spoils, do you? but I warn you, no squinting toward my Bellamira. She is mine! Look elsewhere, if the old lady don’t suit you; but look not to the young one. Divide the spoils equally, to be sure! ‘Pickings’ was the word of our backwoods captain—the unsophisticated heathen! ‘Pickings!’ The rascal might as well have called it stealings at once. But here we are, landed at last. Hello, Brutus, whose portraits are these? Lift your light, rascal. Ha! that’s a pretty woman—devilish like our virgin queen. Who’s that, Plutus? Your young mistress?”

"No, sir; that's her great grandmother, the landgravine."

"God bless her nobility! It's from her that my queen of Sheba inherits her beauty. I shall have no objection to marry into a family where beauty, wealth, and title, are hereditary. I shall love her with all my heart and all my strength. And this, Scipio?"

"That's master, the colonel, sir—Colonel Walton."

"The rebel! Fling it down from the wall, fellow! I'll have no rebel portraits staring me in the face—me, the representative here of his most sacred majesty, George the Third, king of England, Scotland, Ireland, defender of the Faith, and father of a hopeful family. I say, down with the rebel-rascal, fellow; down with it! We'll have a bonfire of all the tribe, this very night. They shall none escape me. I have burnt every effigy of the runagates I could lay hands on; and, by the blessed saints! I will serve this with the same dressing. Do you hear, Beelzebub? Down with it!"

Katharine Walton, in her place of hiding, her soul dilating with indignation, was about to dart forward to interpose, totally forgetful of her situation, when the arm of Singleton firmly wrapped her waist. In a whisper, he said—

"Do not move, Kate, dearest; they will hardly do what this drunken wretch requires. But even should they, you must not peril yourself for the portrait, however precious it may be to your sympathies. Subdue yourself, dear heart. We must submit for a season."

"O, were I but a man!" said the high-souled damsel, almost audibly.

"Hush, Kate! Believe me, I prefer you infinitely as you are."

"O, how can you jest, Robert, at such a moment?"

"Jest! I never was more serious in my life."

"But your tone?"

"Says nothing for my heart, Kate. It is better to smile, if we can; and *play* with words, at the moment when, though we feel daggers, we dare not use them."

Meanwhile, the negro made no movement to obey the orders of Balfour. He simply heard, and looked in stupid wonderment

“Do you not hear me, fellow? Must I tear down the staring effigy myself?”

He advanced as he spoke, and his hands were already uplifted to the picture, when Cruden interposed—

“Leave it for to-night, Balfour. You will alarm the household. Besides, you will give great offence to the young lady. I don’t love rebels any more than you, and will help to give themselves as well as their effigies to the fire; but let it be done quietly, and after you’ve sent the girl to town. You wouldn’t wish to hurt her feelings?”

“Hurt her feelings? No! how could you imagine such a vain thing? Of course, we’ll leave the rebel for another season. But he shall burn in the end, as sure as I’m Nesbitt Balfour.”

“Robert,” whispered Katharine, in trembling accents, “that portrait must be saved from these wretches. It must be saved, Robert, at every hazard.”

“It shall be, Kate, if I survive this night.”

“You promise me;—that is enough.”

CHAPTER VIII.

GHOSTLY PASSAGES.

THE lovers were suddenly hushed, in their whispered conversation, by the nearer approach of the British officers. Cruden had, at length, persuaded his companion to forget the rebel portraits for awhile, and to address himself earnestly to the more important object of their search. Under the guidance of the reluctant Bacchus, they drew nigh to the plate chamber, or the closet, in which, according to the negro, the silver of the household was usually kept. This apartment was placed at the extremity of the passage, closing it up apparently in this quarter, but with a narrow avenue leading beside it, and out upon a balcony in the rear of the building. It was in this narrow passage that Katharine and her lover had taken shelter. The outlet to the balcony was closed by a small door; and against this they leaned, in the depth of shadow. With the dim candle-light which guided the enemy, they might reasonably hope, in this retreat, to escape his notice—unless, indeed, the light were brought to bear distinctly upon their place of hiding. Here they waited, in deep silence and suspense, the approach of the British officers.

Bacchus might have saved the commandant and the commissary the trouble of their present search. He well knew that the silver of the household had all disappeared. It is true that he knew not positively what route it had taken; but his conjectures were correct upon the subject. He was prudently silent, however—rather preferring to seem ignorant of a matter in which a too great knowledge might have ended in subjecting him to some of the responsibility of the abstraction. They

reached the door, and Balfour fumbled with the keys to the great impatience of his companion, who more than once felt tempted to offer his assistance; but forbore, from sufficient experience of the tenacious vanity of the commandant. At length the opening was effected, and the two darted in—Bacchus ingering at the entrance, prepared to make a hasty retreat should the discoveries of his superiors result in any threatening explosion. For a time their hopes were encouraged. They beheld several rows of broad shelves, almost covered with old boxes, some of which were fastened down. It required some time to examine these; but, at length, the unpleasant conviction was forced upon them that they had wasted their labor upon a beggarly account of empty boxes.

“Bacchus,” said Cruden, “is there no other closet?”

“Bacchus, you beast, where’s the plate, I say?”

“Tain’t here, general,” humbly responded the trembling negro.

“Well, that’s information for which we are grateful; but, you bloody villain, if you don’t find it—if a spoon’s missing, a cup, a tankard, a pot, a—a—I’ll have you hung up by the ears, you villain, with your head downward, like Saint Absalom! Do you hear, Plutus? Do you know what hanging means, eh? Do you know how it feels? Do you know——”

“Ask him, Balfour, if there are not other closets.”

“Poh! poh! Cruden; am I the man, at this time of day, to be taught how to put the question to a son of Ishmael? What do we want with closets? What have we got by looking into closets? It’s the plate we want; the precious metals, the cream of Potosi—the silver, the ingots, the Spanish bars, you sooty, black, Ethiopan, Beelzebuh; and if they’re not forthcoming—ay, to-night, this very hour—you shall have despatches for you namesake and grandfather, you nefarious Pluto—head downward, you son of soot and vinegar! Do you hear? Head downward shall you swim the Styx, old Charon, with a fifty-pound shot about your neck, by way of ballast for a long voyage. The plate, old villain, if you wish to be happy on dry land, and keep your honest Ethiopan complexion!”

Bacchus declared himself fully sensible of the dangerous dis-

tion with which he was threatened; but declared himself, in good set terms, and with the most earnest protestations, totally ignorant of the whereabouts of the missing treasure.

"I'm a poor nigger, master; they never gave the silver to me to keep. The colonel or young missis always kept the keys."

"Tell us nothing, fellow," said Cruden. "We know perfectly well that you are the trusted servant of your rebel master; we know that you have helped to hide the plate away. Show us where you have hidden it, and you will be rewarded; refuse, or pretend not to know, and as certainly as the commandant swears it, you will be hung up to the nearest tree."

"Head downward!" muttered Balfour.

"If you will b'lieve a poor black man when he swears, master, I swear to you I never had any hand in hiding it."

"Swear, will you, old Pluto? And by what god will your reverence pretend to swear, eh?" was the demand of Balfour.

"I swear by the blessed Lord, master!"

"Poh! poh! that won't do, you old rascalion. Would you be taking the name of the Lord in vain? Would you have me encourage you in violating the Ten Commandments? Besides, you irreverent Ichabod, such an oath will not bind such a sable sinner as you are. No, no; you shall swear by the Bull Apis, you Egyptian; you shall swear by the Horned Jupiter, by the Grand Turk, and by Mahomet and Pharaoh. Do you hear? Will you swear by Jupiter Ammon?"

"I never heard of such a person, master."

"You never did! Is it possible? You see, Cruden, how lamentably ignorant this rebellious rascal is. I shall have to take this Ethiopan into my own keeping, and educate him in the right knowledge. I will teach you, Busiris, and make you wise—that is, if I do not hang you. But hang you shall, by all the gods of Egypt—and that is an oath I never break—unless you show where you have hid this treasure."

"I never hid it, master: I swear by all them people you mention!"

"People! They are gods, fellow, gods! But he swears, Cruden; he swears."

"Yes," said the other; "and as he does not seem to know

about the hiding, let him conduct us to the other closets and close rooms. There are other rooms, Bacchus," continued Cruden, who ventured, upon the somewhat drowsy state of Balfour, to take a leading part in the examination.

"Some rooms down stairs, colonel," said the negro, eagerly.

"Down stairs? But are there no others above stairs? What is this opening here, for example? Whither does this avenue lead?" and, as he inquired, he approached the mouth of the passage, at the extremity of which Katharine Walton and her lover were concealed.

"Here, Bacchus, bring your light here! This place must lead somewhere—to some chamber or closet. Let us see. Your light! Ten to one this conducts us to the hiding-place of the treasure."

The hand of Katharine clasped convulsively the arm of Singleton, as she heard these suggestions. Her companion felt all the awkwardness of their situation; but he apprehended little of its dangers. He felt that he was quite a match for Cruden even against the half-drunken Balfour; and he had no doubt that Bacchus would not wait for his orders or those of his mistress to join in a death-grapple with the enemy. He gently pressed the hand of the maiden, with the design to reassure her; then quietly felt the handle of his dirk. His breathing was painfully suppressed, however, as he waited for the movement or the reply of Bacchus. That faithful fellow was sufficiently prompt in the endeavor at evasion.

"That's only the passage into the open balcony, master; that just leads out into the open air;" and speaking thus, he resolutely bore the light in the opposite direction.

"Never you mind; bring the light here, fellow; let us see"—the very apparent reluctance of Bacchus stimulating the curiosity of Cruden.

"The open air!" said Balfour. "To be sure, I want a little fresh air. The balcony, too! That should give us a view of the prospect. The scene by starlight must be a fine one. We'll but look out for a moment, Cruden; and then give up the search for the night. I'm sleepy, and, after another touch of the tankard, will doff boots and buff, and to bed. This ignorantus

knows nothing. We'll find the plate in the cellar, or under some of the trees, with a little digging. Don't be uneasy; I carry a divining rod, which is pretty sure to conduct me to all hiding-places. It only needs that the rod should be put in pickle for awhile. Ha, fellow, do you know what is meant by a rod in pickle?"

"Don't let us forget the balcony, Balfour. Do you not wish to look out upon the night?"

"Ay, true; to be sure."

"Here, fellow, Bacchus, your light here."

"Yes, sir," was the answer; and the heart of Katharine Walton bounded to her mouth as she heard the subdued reply, and listened to the movement of feet in the direction of the passage. But Bacchus had no intention of complying with a requisition which he felt so dangerous to the safety of those whom he loved and honored. The negro, forced to the final necessity, still had his refuge in a native cunning. It was at the moment when he turned, as if to obey the imperative commands of Cruden, that Balfour wheeled about to approach him; and Bacchus timed his own movements so well, that his evolutions brought him into sudden contact with the person of the commandant. The light fell from his hand, and was instantly extinguished, while a cry of terror from the offender furnished a new provocation to the curiosity of the British officers.

"Lord ha' mercy upon me! what is that?"

"What's what, you bloody Ishmaelite?" exclaimed Balfour, in sudden fury. "You've ruined my coat with your accursed candlegrease!"

"Lord ha' mercy! Lord ha' mercy!" cried the negro, in well-affected terror.

"What scares you, fool?" demanded Cruden.

"You no see, master? The old lady! She walks! I see her jest as I was turning with the candle."

"What, the old landgrave's housekeeper?" demanded Balfour.

"Pshaw!" cried Cruden; "don't encourage this blockhead in his nonsense. Away, fool, and relight your candle; and may the devil take you as you go!"

The commissioner of confiscated estates was now thoroughly roused. His disappointment, in the search after the missing plate, and the fear that it would prove wholly beyond his reach, had vexed him beyond endurance. He was really glad of an occasion to vent his fury upon the negro, since the temper of Balfour was such as to render it necessary that he should exhibit the utmost forbearance in regard to his conduct, which Cruden was nevertheless greatly disposed to censure a thousand times a day. It was with a heavy buffet that he sent Bacchus off to procure a light, following his departure with a volley of oaths, which proved that, if slow to provocation, his wrath, when aroused, was sufficiently unmeasured. Even Balfour found it proper to rebuke the violence which did not scruple at the quality of his curses.

"Don't swear, Cruden, don't; its a pernicious immoral practice; and here, in the dark, at midnight—for I heard the clock strike below just before old Charon dropped the candle—and with the possibility—I say possibility, Cruden—that we are surrounded by spirits of the dead, ghosts of past generations, venerable shades of nobility—for you must not forget that the ancestors of this rebel colonel were landgraves and landgravinoes—his grandmother, as you hear, being the first landgrave in the family—you saw her portrait on the wall, with an evident beard upon her chin, no doubt intended by the painter to denote the dignity and authority of her rank, as Michael Angelo painted Moses with a pair of horns; and there is a propriety in it, do you see; for ghosts—By the way, Cruden, you believe in ghosts, don't you?"

"Not a bit."

"You don't? Then I'm sorry for his majesty's service that it has such an unbelieving infidel in it. A man without faith is no better than a Turk. It's a sign that he has no reverence. And that's the true reason why these Americans became rebels. The moment they ceased to believe in ghosts and other sacred things, they wanted to set up for themselves. Don't you follow their example. But where are you going?"

Cruden was striding to and fro impatiently.

"Nowhere."

“Don't attempt to walk in this solid darkness,” counselled the moralizing Balfour, who gradually, and with some effort, holding on to the wall the while, let himself down upon the floor, his solid bulk, in spite of all his caution, giving it a heavy shake as he descended. “Don't walk, Cruden; you may happen upon a pitfall; you may get to the stairway and slip. Ah! did you hear nothing, Cruden?”

“Nothing!” somewhat abruptly.

“I surely heard a whisper and a rustling, as if of some ancient silken garment. Come near to me, Cruden, if you would hear. I wish that fellow Bacchus would make haste with his light. I surely heard a footstep! Listen, Cruden.”

“I hear nothing! It's your fancy, Balfour;” and the other continued to stride away as he spoke, not seeming to heed the repeated requests of Balfour to approach him, in order properly to listen.

Balfour's senses, in all probability had not deceived him. The moment that Bacchus had disappeared, Singleton whispered to his trembling companion—

“Now is our time, Kate, if we would escape. Bacchus has flung down his light only to give us the opportunity. Let us use it.”

“But they are at the entrance?”

“I think not. Near it, I grant you; but on the side, and with room enough for us to pass. Follow me.”

It was lucky that the necessities of the service had long since forced upon Singleton the use of moccasins. There were few boots in the camp of Marion. The soft buckskin enabled our partisan to tread lightly through the passage; the heavy tread of Cruden contributing greatly to hush all inferior sounds. Singleton grasped firmly, but gently, the wrist of his companion. But she no longer trembled; her soul was now fully nerved to the task. Balfour had, however, in reality, settled down in part, at the entrance of the passage. He was seeking this position of humility and repose at the very moment when the two began their movement. For the instant, it compelled them to pause; but when assured that he was fairly conched, they passed lightly beside him; and, had not his superstitious fancies been awakened

by the story of the ghostly landgravine, his suspicions might have been more keenly awakened by the supposed rustlings of the ancient silk. To steer wide of Cruden was an easy task for our fugitives, as his footsteps announced his whereabouts with peculiar emphasis. The great passage was traversed with safety, and the maiden paused at the door of her chamber. Fortunately, it had been left ajar when she joined Singleton, though this had been done without regard to any anticipations of the interruptions they had undergone. To push it open and enter occasioned no noise. Singleton detained her only for an instant, as he whispered—

“Be not alarmed, Kate, at anything that may take place to-night—at any uproar or commotion.”

“What mean you? What——But go! I hear Bacchus. You have not a moment to lose.”

He pressed her hand, and stole off to the stairway. The steps yielded and creaked as he descended; but the heavy boots of Cruden still served as a sufficient diversion of the sound from the senses of the British officers. Our partisan passed on that side of the hall below which lay in shadow, being careful not to place himself within the range of the light carried by Bacchus, who crossed him in the passage. He had something to say to the negro, but deferred it prudently, nothing doubting that he would find his way to his chamber when all had become quiet in the house.

Let us once more ascend with the light, and see the condition of the enemy. Balfour was philosophizing. His drink had rendered him somewhat superstitious.

“I say, Cruden,” said he, “if I have not felt the rustling of a ghost’s petticoat to-night, may I be——!”

“I see no necessity why even a female ghost should appear in petticoats.”

“It would be a very improper thing to appear without them,” was the decent reply. “But,” continued our philosopher, “I certainly heard her footsteps.”

“Really, Balfour, if I could conceive of ghosts at all, I should certainly have no reason to suppose that they needed to make any noise in walking. A ghost, with so much materiality about

it as to make her footsteps heard, is one with whom any strong man might safely grapple."

"Cruden, Cruden, you are no better than a pagan. You have no faith in sacred things. I certainly heard a rustling as of silks, and the tread of a person as if in slippers—a dainty, light, female footstep, such as might reasonably be set down by an ancient lady of noble family. I am sure it was a ghost. I feel all over as if a cold wind had been blowing upon me. I must have a noggin; I must drink! I must sleep. Confound the plate, I say! I'd sooner lose it all than feel so cursed uncomfortable."

"I am afraid it *is* lost, Balfour," responded the other, in tones of more lugubrious solemnity than those which his companion had used in the discussion of the supernatural.

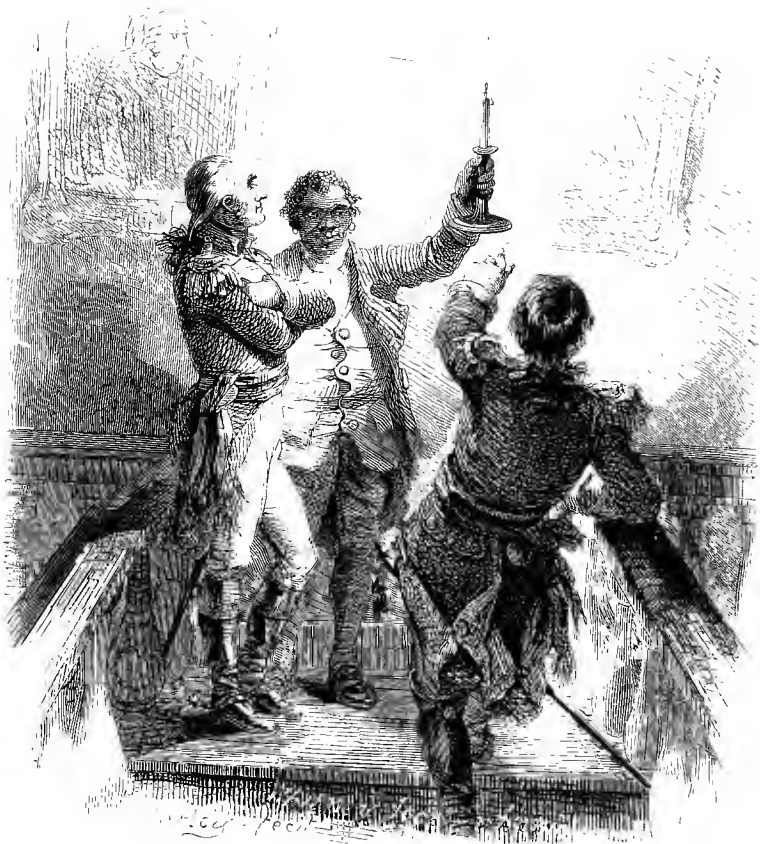
"No matter," was the reply of Balfour; "we'll talk the matter over in the daylight. I don't despair. There is the cellar yet, and the vaults. Vaults are famous places, as I told you, for hiding treasure. But the mention of vaults brings back that ghost again. Where are you, Cruden? Why do you walk off to such a distance? Beware! You'll tumble down the steps headlong, and I shall then have you haunting me for ever after."

"No fear. But here the negro comes with the light. Perhaps it is just as well that we should go to bed at once, and leave the search till the morning. It is not likely that we shall make much progress under present circumstances."

"Some of that liquor first, Cruden. My night-cap is necessary to my sleep. I thought I had taken quite enough already; but this cold wind has chilled me to the bones, and sobered me entirely. The ghost must have had something to do with it—one spirit acting upon another."

"The light now appeared, and Bacchus emerged from the stairhead; and with an evident grin upon his features as he beheld Cruden erect in the centre of the passage, as if doubtful where to turn, bewildered utterly in the dark; and Balfour at the extremity of it, his huge frame in a sitting posture, in which dignity did not seem to have been greatly consulted.

"**Ha, Beelzebub,**" cried the commandant, the moment he be-



held the visage of the negro, "you are here at last! This is a hanging matter, you scoundrel, to leave us here in the dark to be tormented by the ghosts of your old grandmother. I have hung many a better fellow than yourself for half the offence; and, were you a white man, you should never see another daylight. Look to it, rascal, and toe the mark hereafter, or even your complexion shall not save you from the gallows."

"I will look to it, general, jest as you tell me."

"See that you do. Here, Cruden, give me an arm; my limbs seem quite stiff and numb'd. That infernal wind! It was surely generated in a sepulchre!"

Cruden did as he was desired, and the bulky proportions of the commandant were raised to an erect position on the floor. He stood motionless for a moment, having thrown off the arm that helped him up, as if to steady himself for further progress; but the ghost, or rather his superstitious fancies, had really done much to sober him. His hesitation was due less to any real necessity than to his own doubts of the certainty of his progress. While thus he stood, Cruden in the advance, and Bacchus between the two, aiming to divide the light with strict impartiality, for their mutual benefit, the eyes of Balfour rested upon the portraits against the wall. That of the ancient landgravine first compelled his attention.

"Hark you, Beelzebub; that, you say, is the venerable lady who still keeps house here at midnight? She is the proprietor of the ghost by which I have been haunted. It was her garment that rustled beside me, and her footsteps that I heard; and it was she that blew upon me with her ghostly breath, giving me cold and rheumatics. She shall burn as a witch to-morrow, with her rebel grandson. Do you hear, fellow? Let the fagots be collected after breakfast to-morrow. We shall have a bonfire that shall be a due warning to witch and rebel; and to all, you sooty rascal, that believe in them."

"Come, Balfour, let us retire."

Cruden was now at the head of the stairway.

"Let us drink, first. Advance the light, Beelzebub; and see that you hear it steadily. Drop it again, and I smite your head off where you stand, ghost or no ghost. It's not so sure, yet,

that you shall escape from hanging. If there be but a single spot of grease on my regimentals to-morrow, Beelzebub—say your prayers suddenly. I shall give you very little time.”

The party at length found themselves safely below. Scarcely had they disappeared, when Mistress Barbara Walton put her head out of her chamber door. She had overheard the progress from beginning to end. She had drank in, with particular sense of indignation, that portion of the dialogue which, as the two officers first ascended the stairs, had related to herself, and the cavalier disposition which it was proposed to make of her: and she felt that she was in some measure retorting upon the parties themselves when she could vent her anger on the very spot which had witnessed their insolence.

“The brutes!” she replied; “the foreign brutes! But I despise them from the bottom of my heart. I would not bestow my hand upon their king himself, the miserable Hanover turnip, let alone his hirelings. The drunken wretches! Oh!” she exclaimed, looking up at the picture of the venerable landgravine threatened with the flames—“oh! how I wish that her blessed spirit could have breathed upon them, the blasphemous wretches—breathed cramps upon their bones, the abominable heathens! To speak of me as they have done! Of me—the only sister of Richard Walton! Oh, if he were here—if I could only tell him how I have been treated!”

The British officers suffered little from this burst of indignation. Balfour was soon comforted in the enjoyment of his night-cap; and Cruden was not unwilling to console himself, under his disappointments, by sharing freely of the beverage. In a little while both of them were asleep—the former in full possession of such a sleep as could only follow from the use of such a night-cap.

CHAPTER IX.

RING THE ALARM-BELL.

It was not very long after the house had become quiet, that the faithful Bacchus might have been seen entering the chamber of Singleton, or, as we shall continue to call him for a time, the captain of loyalists. He remained some time in counsel with the latter; and, at length, the two emerged together from the room. But they came forth in utter darkness, invisible to each other, and only secure in their movements by their equal familiarity with the several localities of the house. We may mention that Furness had not sought his couch when he separated from Katharine Walton. He was now armed to the teeth, with sword and pistol; his hunting-horn suspended from his neck, and his whole appearance that of one ready for flight or action. Bacchus soon left his side, and our partisan awaited him in the great passage of the hall. But a little time had elapsed when the negro rejoined him. They then left the house together, and disappeared among the shade-trees which surrounded it on every side.

An hour might have elapsed after their departure, when the silence of midnight was broken by the single blast of a horn, apparently sounded at some distance. This was echoed by another that seemed to issue from the front avenue of the dwelling. Both avenues, front and rear, had been occupied, in part, by the detachment which had accompanied the commandant from Dorchester, and which was justly supposed fully equal to his protection and objects. But the force which, concentrated, would have been adequate to these purposes, was not sufficient to cover the vast extent of woods which encompassed

the dwelling; and his men, when scattered, were really lost amidst the spacious forest-area of which "The Oaks" constituted the centre. Distributed at certain points, as guards and sentinels, however well disposed, there were still long stretches of space and thicket which the detachment failed to cover; through the avenues of which a subtle scout, familiar with the region, might easily pick his way, unseen and unsuspected, under cover of the night. The Scotch officer on duty for the night, a Captain M'Dowell, was circumspect and vigilant; but he was ignorant of the neighborhood, and, without any inferiority of intelligence or neglect of duty, had failed to dispose his little force to the best advantage. But he was wakeful; and the sound of the midnight and mysterious horn had aroused him to every exercise of vigilance. Another signal followed from another quarter, which, after a brief pause, was echoed from a fourth; and our worthy captain of the guard began to fancy that his little force was entirely surrounded. He at once proceeded to array and bring his separate squads together; keeping them as much as possible *in hand*, and in preparation for all events. We need not follow him in his operations, satisfied that, awakened to a sense of possible danger, he is the man to make the best disposition of his resources.

It was in the moment when Balfour's sleep was of the profoundest character, that Cruden, followed by his white servant, both armed, but very imperfectly dressed, bolted headlong into the chamber of the sleeping commandant. He heard nothing of the intrusion. He was in a world very far away from that in which he was required to play his part—a world in which his dreams of delight were singularly mixed with those of doubt; in which visions of boundless treasures were opened to his sight but denied his grasp—a pale, spectral form of an ancient lady rejoicing in a beard, always passing between him and the object of his desires. There were other visions to charm his eyes, in which the treasure took the shape of a beautiful young woman while the obstacle that opposed his approach was that of a fierce rebel, breathing rage and defiance, whom his fancy readily conceived to be no other than the insurgent father of Katharine Walton. With a brain thus filled with confused and conflicting

objects, and not altogether free from the effects of that torpifying nostrum upon which he had retired, the events in progress, in his actual world, however startling, made little or no impression upon his senses. The noise that filled his ears was associated happily with the incidents in his dreaming experience, and this failed entirely to arouse him to external consciousness.

"He sleeps like an ox," cried Cruden, as he held the candle above the sleeper, and shook him roughly by the shoulder.

"Ha! ho! there! What would you be after? Will you deny me? Defy me? Do you think that I will give it up—that I fear your sword, you infernal rebel, or your——Eh! what!"—opening his eyes.

The rough ministry of the commissioner of confiscated estates at length promised to be effectual. The incoherent speech of the dreamer began to exhibit signs of a returning faculty of thought.

"What! Cruden! you! What the devil's the matter?"

"Do you not hear? The devil seems to be the matter indeed!"

"Hear! What should I hear?"

"What! do you *not* hear? There's uproar enough to rouse all the seven sleepers, I should think."

"And so there is! What is it?"

"Rouse up, and get yourself dressed. There is a surprise, or something like it."

With the aid of Cruden and his servant, the commandant was soon upon his feet, rather submitting to be put into clothes and armor than greatly succoring himself. His faculties were still bewildered, but brightening with the rise and fall of the noises from without. These were such as might naturally be occasioned by the surprise of a post, at midnight, by an enemy—the rush and shout of men on horseback, the blast of bugles, and occasionally the sharp percussion of the pistol-shot suddenly rising above the general confusion.

It was not long before Balfour was ready. With sword and pistol in hand, accompanied by Cruden similarly equipped, he now made his way out of the chamber to the front entrance of the house in which quarter the greatest uproar seemed to prevail.

When there, and standing in the open air under the light of the stars, they could more distinctly trace the progress of the noise. It seemed to spread now equally away to the river, on the route below, and in the rear of the mansion, making in a westerly direction. They had not well begun making their observations, uncertain in which direction to turn their steps, when they suddenly beheld a lithe and active figure darting from the thicket in the rear, and making toward them. The stranger was at once challenged by Cruden, and proved to be our loyalist captain, Furness. He, too, carried sword and pistol ready in his grasp; and his voice and manner were those of one eager and excited by the fray. He seemed nowise surprised by their appearance, however much they may have been at his.

“Rather more scared than hurt, I reckon, colonel,” was his frank and ready salutation. “How long have you been out?”

“Only this moment,” was the answer of Balfour. “But what’s the matter?”

“There’s no telling exactly. Everything seems to have become wild without a reason. I was roused from as sweet a sleep as I ever tasted, by the ringing of a horn in my very ears—so it seemed to me. And then there was another horn answering to that; then, after a little while, there was a shout and a halloo, and the rush of one horse, and then another, and then a score of pistol-shots. With that, I put out to see what was the matter, and what was to be done, and followed in the direction of the noise; but I could find out nothing, got bewildered in the woods, and, in beating about for an opening, I heard a rush not far off. Now, says I, the enemy is upon me; and I braced myself up for a hard fight as well as I could. I heard the bush break suddenly just before me, and I called out. No answer; but, as the bush moved, I cracked away at it with a pistol-shot, and soon heard a scamper. It proved to be an old cow, who was evidently more alarmed than anybody else. She moved off mighty brisk after that; but it’s ten to one she carries the mark of my bullet. I was so nigh to her that I could not well have missed.”

“And this is all you know, Captain Furness?”

“Pretty much all! I have only seen two or three of the

troopers, and they seemed so much disposed to send their bullets at me, that I have tried to steer clear of them. They are gone out mostly somewhere to the west; but they know the country better than I do, for I've quite lost my reckoning where I am."

At this moment, the clatter of a horseman, at a hard gallop, awakened the curiosity of all parties anew. He emerged from the rear avenue to the dwelling, and soon alighted before Balfour. He was a sergeant, and a pretty old one, despatched by the captain of the guard to satisfy the doubts and inquiries of his superior. But his information was very meagre. It amounted only to this—that there had been an alarm; that the post had been apparently threatened on every side at different times; that bugles had been sounded, seemingly as signals, but that they had seen no human enemy, and had found nothing living within their circuit but themselves and a drove of milch cattle. Still, some of the men had reported the sound of horses' feet, as of a considerable party of mounted men; and, as they insisted upon the report, the captain had deemed it advisable to push the search in the direction which the enemy had been described as having pursued. This was all that he could say. He eyed our loyalist captain rather closely during the recital, and at length said—

"Was it you, sir, I met off here in the south, beating about the bushes?"

"I reckon it was, sergeant; and, if I hadn't been quick enough, your pistol-shot wouldn't have left me much chance of answering you now. 'Twas the narrowest escape I ever had."

"And why didn't you answer?"

"For the best of reasons. You asked me for the word, and I knew nothing about it. But I'll take good care never to volunteer again when there's a surprise, without getting proper information beforehand."

The sergeant looked for a moment steadily at the captain of loyalists. He was a shrewd, keen, almost white-headed soldier, and the gaze of his light blue eye was fixed and penetrating, as if he referred to this scrutiny as a last test for resolving his doubts; but the appearance of Furness was singularly composed

and *nonchalant*. He did not appear to regard himself as an object of watch, or doubt, or inquiry at all. The soldier seemed at length satisfied; and, touching his cap reverently, said to Balfour—

“It’s all right, colonel?”

“Yes, sergeant, that will do. Remount, and hurry back to Captain M’Dowell. Tell him to discontinue this chase. He may only find himself in some cursed ambush. Let him return, and resume his station. We shall hear his full report in the daylight.”

The sergeant bowed, and cantered off in a moment.

“It seems you had a narrow escape, Captain Furness,” said Balfour, with more of respectful consideration in his manner than had usually marked his deportment when addressing the loyalist.

“Yes, indeed, colonel; a much narrower escape than a man bargains for at the hands of his friends.”

“But it was all a mistake, captain.”

“True; but it’s a mighty small consolation, with a bullet through one’s brains or body, to be told that the shot was meant for a very different person.”

“Never mind, captain—a miss, as your own people say, is as good as a mile. It is something gained for you that we have had such excellent proof of your vigilance and courage in his majesty’s cause. Future favors will heal past hurts.”

He was yet speaking—all the parties standing grouped, at the southern or chief entrance of the building, and partly within the hall—usually called, in the south, the passage, generally as, in large dwelling-houses, running through the centre of the building—when the door in the rear was heard to creak upon its hinges. Cruden, who at this moment was within the passage, though near the southern entrance and the rest of the group, turned instantly, and beheld a female figure which had just entered. He could distinguish no features, since the only light within the apartment was afforded by an unsnuffed candle, which had been set down by his servant on the floor when hurrying from Balfour’s chamber—the light used by the party without, being a common lantern. At first, a vague remembrance of

Balfour's ghost of the Landgravine passed through Cruden's brain; but he was of an intellect too stolid to suffer him long to remain under the delusion of his fancies. He at once conjectured that this female must be Katharine Walton or her aunt; and, in either case, he associated her appearance, at this hour and under these circumstances, with the yet unaccounted for alarms of the night. His cupidity promptly suggested that the plate, which had been the object of his search already, was even now in course of hiding or removal; and, with this conjecture, his decision was as eager, and his performance as impetuous as that of the young lover hurrying his virgin favorite to the altar. With a bound, scarcely consistent with the dignity of his official station and the massive dimensions of his person, he darted across the passage, and grappled the stranger by the wrist.

"Ho! there! the light—bring the light. Balfour, I fancy I have captured your ghost."

Our commissioner of confiscated estates did not perceive that, just behind his captive, and about to enter the door after her was the sooty face of Bacchus. The darkness favored the escape of the negro, who, crouching quietly without, waited his opportunity to enter the hall unscen.

"What means this violence, Colonel Cruden?" was the calm inquiry made by Katharine Walton, in the most serene and gentle accents. Meanwhile, Balfour and our captain of loyalists had hastened to the group at the summons of the excited Cruden. It was with a difficult effort that Singleton could suppress his emotions, and subdue the feeling that prompted him to seize the commissioner by the throat and punish him for the brutal grasp which he had set upon the woman of his heart; but the peril of his situation compelled his forbearance, however unwilling, and stifled the passion working in his soul, however violent. But his hand more than once wrought as if working with his dagger; and, with clenched teeth, he found himself compelled repeatedly to turn away from the scene and pace the hall in an excitement which was scarcely to be repressed. Katharine Walton repeated her demand of her assailant, in accents, however, so firm and calm, as only to increase his indignation.

"What means this violence, madam, indeed? What means

this uproar, this alarm, madam, at this unseasonable hour of the night? Why are you here, let me ask you, and habited as if for a journey? Look! it is clear she has been abroad—her bonnet and clothes are wet with the dew. Answer, Miss Walton—what has carried you out at this hour? Where have you been? What have you been doing? Speak—you do not answer.”

“And if you were to subject my neck, sir, to a grasp as vice-like as that which you hold upon my wrist, you should receive no answer from my lips, unless at my perfect pleasure,” was the reply of the maiden.

“Ha! do you defy me?”

“I scorn you, sir! Release me, sir, if you would not subject yourself to the scorn of all those who hear of this indignity.”

Singleton could no longer avoid interposition; but he maintained the character which he had assumed. Coming forward, he said—

“That’s right, colonel; I don’t see why a woman shouldn’t be made to speak out, in war-times, just the same as a man. I’ve seen the thing tried before. There was a woman up in our parts that hid her husband away, and Major Tatem burnt a hole in her tongue to make her speak. If you want help now, colonel, just you say the word, and I reckon that both of us together can bring this young woman to her senses.”

Cruden turned fiercely upon the speaker, as he rather flung the maiden from his grasp than released her. The offer of help in such a performance as that in which he was engaged, was a sufficient reflection—though apparently very innocently made—upon the brutality of the action.

“Your assistance will be asked when it is desired, sir,” was the angry answer.

“O yes, I reckon; but, you see, I’ve been a sort of volunteer once already to-night, and I’m always ready to help his majesty’s officers in time of trouble.”

“Miss Walton,” said Balfour, with a sort of severe courtesy, “you are aware that the circumstances in which you appear to-night are exceedingly suspicious.”

“Certainly, sir; I am seen in ‘ull dress in my father’s dwell-

ling at midnight. Heretofore, sir, I have been accustomed to act my pleasure in this house. I am painfully reminded that I have other and less indulgent masters. It must not surprise you that I am slow to recognise or understand my new responsibilities”

“We are certainly in authority here, Miss Walton; but without any desire of subjecting you to any painful or personal restraint or coercion.”

“The bonds of your colleague, sir, are an excellent commentary upon your forbearance. I confess they afford me no grateful ideas of the liberty which I am to enjoy in future. But, as I have said, you are the masters here. Am I permitted to retire?”

“Certainly, Miss Walton; but you will not think me unreasonable, if, in the morning, I shall ask you for an explanation of present appearances. This——”

He was interrupted by an exclamation from Cruden’s servant, at the southern entrance. All parties turned at the interruption.

“There seems to be a great fire, colonel,” said the servant. “Look away yonder in the south.”

Balfour and Cruden hastily joined him, and a smile of intelligence was interchanged between the maiden and her lover. In the meantime, Bacchus seized the opportunity quietly to make his way into the hall. The party at the entrance was soon overwhelmed with conflicting speculations as to the conflagration which now spread out magnificently before their eyes.

“The woods are on fire,” said Cruden.

“No,” was the reply of Balfour; “it is a house rather. Miss Walton, pray oblige me—can you explain the nature of this fire?”

Katharine smiled playfully.

“I will give you no answer to any questions, Colonel Balfour, to-night—if only to satisfy myself that the coercion under which I labor does not extend to my thoughts or speech. I presume that, with another day, there will be no mystery about any of the events of this night.”

With these words, she disappeared. The oath of vexation was only half uttered on the lips of Balfour, when his eye caught

sight of Bacchus, stretching forward curiously in the rear of the loyalist.

"Ha! fellow, is it you? You, at least, shall answer. Look, sirrah—what does that fire mean?"

"I reckon it's the rice-stacks, master, that's a burning."

"The rice-stacks!" exclaimed Cruden, in horror. "The rice-stacks! the whole crop of rice—a thousand barrels or more! What malignity! And could this young woman have been guilty of such a crime? Has she, in mere hatred to his majesty's cause, wantonly set fire to a most valuable property of her own?"

"Impossible!" replied Balfour. "There has been an enemy about us: this was his object. The alarm was a real one. But we must see if anything can be saved, Captain Furness, you have already given proof of your zeal to-night in his majesty's cause. May I beg your further assistance? We will sound our bugles, and call in our squad. Meanwhile, let us hasten to the spot. The stacks are generally separate; while one or more burn we may save the rest?"

The idea was an absurd one, and proved sufficiently fruitless. The stacks were all on fire, and in great part consumed before the parties reached the spot. The hands that did the mischief left little to be done; and Cruden groaned in the agony of his spirit, at a loss of profits which almost made him forgetful of the missing plate. But day dawns while he surveys the spectacle; and the red flames, growing pale in the thickening light, play now only in fitful tongues and jets among the smouldering ashes of the ripened grain, gathered vainly from the sheaves of a bounteous harvest.

"We must have a thorough examination into this diabolical business," said Balfour, as he led the returning party to the dwelling.

CHAPTER X.

ALL SORTS OF SURPRISES.

WITH the return to the dwelling, Balfour and Cruden resumed the search into the secrets of the household, which, as we have seen, was begun with doubtful results during the previous night. The stores of wine proved satisfactory to the former; but the Flemish account, in most respects, which the exploration yielded, greatly increased the ill-humor of the latter. The plate was nowhere visible; and certain reports, made by the captain on duty, in respect to the affairs of the plantation, tended greatly to increase the gravity of both these persons. But we need not anticipate the gradual development of the various causes of grievance. Enough to remark, in this place, that, when descending the stairs from the attic, where he had been to examine into the condition of the Madeira, and passing through the great passage which was the scene of the most striking part of their labors the previous night, the eye of Balfour was arrested by the pictures upon the wall, or rather by the vacant panels which appeared among them. To his consternation, the portraits of both the rebel colonel and of the ghostly landgravine, which he had equally devoted to the flames, had disappeared from their places.

"The devil!" he exclaimed to Cruden, pointing to the deficiency; "we must have been overheard last night."

"How should it have been otherwise?" was the surly answer "These chambers are occupied by the women, and you spoke as if you meant that they should hear everything. With a knowledge of your purpose they have defeated it, they have contrived to secrete the pictures."

"But I will contrive to find them!" was the angrily-expressed resolution of Balfour. "They shall not baffle me. They can not have carried them far, and they shall burn still. Prayers shall not save them."

"Let me counsel you first to send off the women to the city. Make no stir till you have got rid of them."

"You are right; but I shall take leave to examine them first, touching the events of last night."

"Say nothing of your own purposes while doing so," said Cruden. "We have probably already taught them quite too much. You might have burnt the portraits of the old woman and the rebel, without a word, but for that unnecessary threat last night."

"And would I have seen the portraits, or had any occasion to speak of them, but for your confounded impatience to look after the silver? In all probability, the occasion and the warning have been seized for carrying that away as well as the pictures."

"I am afraid it was gone long before. But that idea of burning the pictures might have taught these malignants what to do with the rice. But it is too late now for retort and recrimination; and here comes the captain of loyalists."

Furness came to the foot of the stairs and met them.

"The young lady tells me that breakfast is waiting for you, gentlemen."

"The young lady?" exclaimed Balfour, eyeing the partisan keenly. "So, you have been talking with her, eh?"

"Why yes," replied the other, with a manner of rare simplicity. "I somehow began to feel as if I could eat a bit after the run, and hurry, and confusion of the night; so I pushed into the dining-room, looking out for the commissary. I met the young woman there, and had a little talk with her; and breakfast was just then beginning to make its appearance."

"What had she to say about this affair of last night?" demanded Cruden.

"Mighty little: she seems rather shy to speak. But she don't look as if there had been any alarm. She's as cool as a cucumber if not so green."

"You are a wit, Captain Furness," grimly remarked Cruden, as the three walked together into the breakfast-room.

Here they found the excellent aunt and her niece, evidently waiting for their uninvited guests. In the rigid and contracted features of the former, so different from their amiable expression of the previous evening, might be traced the counter influences produced upon her mind by what she had heard, during their midnight conference, of the irreverent allusions to herself by the commandant of Charleston. But the face of Katharine was as placid as if she had enjoyed the most peaceful and unbroken slumbers—as if there had been nothing to affect her repose, her peace of mind, or to annoy her with apprehensions either of the present or the future. Indeed, there was a buoyant something in her countenance and manner which declared for a feeling of exhilaration, if not of triumph prevailing in her bosom. The breakfast-table exhibited the most ample cheer, and all was grace and neatness in the display. The ladies took their seats after a brief salutation, and the guests immediately followed their example.

It was the purpose of Balfour to forbear all subjects of annoyance until after the repast; but he was not permitted to be thus forbearing. He had scarcely commenced eating, before the captain of the guard requested to see him at the entrance. Excusing himself, with some impatience, he went out; and returned, after a brief interval, with quite an inflamed countenance.

“Miss Walton,” said he, “are you aware that all the negroes of your father have disappeared from the plantation?”

“I have heard so, sir,” quietly replied the lady.

“Heard so, Miss Walton? And who could have presumed to carry them off without your permission?”

“No one, I fancy, sir, unless my father himself.”

“Your father himself! What! do you know that he ordered their departure?”

“I presumed so, sir. They would hardly have gone unless he had done so.”

“And whither have they gone?”

“Ah, now, sir, you demand much more than I can answer.”

“And when did they leave the place?”

“Nor can I answer that, exactly. I have reason to think some hours before your arrival.”

“You knew of our coming, then?”

“Not a syllable. My father may have done so; and I myself thought it not improbable.”

“It was in anticipation of our visit, then, I am to understand, that you have conveyed away—your father, I mean—all the moveable valuables of your plantation and household; your negroes, horses; your plate, silver, and——”

The maiden answered with a smile:—

“Nay, sir, but your questions seem to lead to odd suspicions of the purpose of your visit. How should we suppose that the presence of his majesty’s officers should be hurtful to such possessions?”

“No evasion, Miss Walton, if you please,” was the interruption of Cruden.

“It is not my habit, sir, to indulge in evasions of any sort. I rather comment on an inquiry than refuse to answer it. I note it as singular only, that his majesty’s officers, high in rank and renowned in service, should suppose that their simple approach should naturally cause the riches of a dwelling to take wings and fly. In regard to ours, such as they are—our plate, money, and jewels—it gives me pleasure to inform you that they disappeared long before your presence was expected. My father, some time ago, adopted a very new and unusual sort of alchemy. He turned his gold and silver into baser metals—into iron and steel, out of which lances, and bayonets, and broadswords, have been manufactured; and these have been circulating among his majesty’s officers and soldiers quite as freely, if less gratefully, than if they had been gold and silver.”

“Well,” exclaimed the loyalist captain, with a rare abruptness, “if the young woman doesn’t talk the most downright rebellion, I don’t know what it is she means to say.”

Balfour looked toward him with a ghastly smile, which had in it something of rebuke, however; and the risible muscles of the fair Katharine could scarcely be subdued as she listened to the downright language of her lover; and watched the countenance, expressive of the most admirable simplicity and astonishment, with which he accompanied his words. Balfour resumed:—

“My dear Miss Walton, you are a wit. His majesty’s officers

are indebted to you. But the business is quite too serious with us for jest, however amusing it may seem to you. We have too much at stake for fun——”

“And I have nothing at stake, sir, I suppose!” she abruptly replied, the moisture gathering in her eyes; “a homestead overrun with a foreign soldiery; a family torn asunder, its privacy invaded, its slaves scattered in flight, and the head of the house in exile, and threatened with butchery. Oh, sir, I certainly have more reason for merriment than can be the case with you!”

“I did not mean that, my dear young lady. I did not mean to give you pain. But you must see that I am here as the agent of my sovereign, and sworn that nothing shall divert me from my duties. I am compelled, however unwillingly, to ask you those questions, as I must report on all the facts to my superiors. I beg that you will not hold me accountable for the simple performance of a duty which I dare not avoid.”

“Proceed, sir, with your questions.”

“I’ll thank you, ma’am, for another cup of that coffee,” said the captain of loyalists, pushing the cup over to the stately aunt.

“Miss Walton, do you know by whose orders the rice-stacks were consumed last night, and who was the agent in the work?”

“I have reason to believe that my father ordered their destruction. Of the particular hand by which the torch was applied, I can tell you nothing.”

“But you know?”

“No, sir, I do not.”

“There were certain pictures removed from the walls of the gallery above stairs, during the night?”

“Which you had sentenced to the flames, sir?”

“You overheard us, Miss Walton.”

“I did, and resolved that you should burn me as soon. I had them removed, sir. For this, I only am responsible.”

“You had? Pray, Miss Walton, who was your agent in this business?”

“I answer you, sir, the more willingly, as I rejoice to believe that he is now entirely beyond your reach. Sir—Colonel Balfour—to spare you the necessity for further inquiries, let me assure you that the only person having any right to dispose of

Colonel Walton's property as has been done, was the very person who did exercise this right. It was by his act that our plate has disappeared, our negroes and horses withdrawn from the estate, the rice fired in the stack, and the pictures removed."

"You do not mean——"

"Yes, sir, I do mean that Colonel Walton himself had the rice fired last night; and it was by his direction, though at my entreaty, that the portraits were removed."

"But he did this through the hands of others. Miss Walton, you were abroad last night, in the very hour of confusion and alarm. I demand of you, as you hope for indulgence at the hands of his majesty, to declare what agent of your father did you see in the execution of these acts."

"No agent, sir. I saw my father himself! To *him* the portraits were delivered, and under his eye were the torches applied to the rice-stacks."

Balfour and Cruden both bounded from their seats, the former nearly drawing the cloth, cups, and breakfast, from the table. For a moment he regarded the features of Katharine Walton with a glance of equal rage and astonishment. She, too, had risen; and her eyes met those of the commandant with a calm smile, seasoned with something of triumph and exultation. The loyalist captain, meanwhile, continued his somewhat protracted occupation of draining his coffee-cup. "One stupid moment, motionless, stood" the British officer. In the next, Balfour cried aloud—

"Two hundred guineas for him who takes the rebel alive!"

With this cry, he rushed to the door of the house, where a sergeant was in waiting. Katharine almost crouched as she heard these words. She pressed her hand spasmodically to her heart, and an expression of keen agony passed over her face. It was but an instant, however. Cruden had followed Balfour to the door, and a single glance of intelligence between the maiden and her lover served to reassure her. In the next instant, our partisan had joined Balfour in the courtyard.

"Colonel," said he, "if you're going to send out in pursuit of the rebel, I'm your man as a volunteer. I'd like to have the

fingering of a couple of hundred of the real stuff as well as anything I know."

"Captain Furness, you will do honor to his majesty's service. I accept your offer."

In less than twenty minutes, the whole force of the British at the "Oaks" was in keen pursuit; the supposed captain of loyalists taking the lead, intrusted with a *quasi* command, and pursuing the chase with an eagerness which charmed all parties equally with his energy and zeal.

CHAPTER XI.

STRANGE RELATIONSHIPS.

THE purpose of Singleton, in taking part in the pursuit of Colonel Walton, may be readily conjectured. With his equal knowledge of his uncle's objects, and of the country through which he rode, it was easy, particularly as the region was little known by any of the pursuers, to shape and direct the chase unprofitably. It was maintained during the day, under many encouraging auguries, but was wholly without results; and the party returned to the "Oaks" about midnight in a condition of utter exhaustion.

The captain of loyalists had sufficiently proved his zeal, and Balfour was pleased to bestow upon him the highest commendations. They had long conferences together in regard to the interests of the common cause, particularly with reference to the state of feeling in the back country, and by what processes the spirit of liberty was to be subdued, and that of a blind devotion to his majesty's cause was to be inculcated and encouraged.

On all these matters Singleton was able to speak with equal confidence and knowledge. It was fortunate that a previous and very intimate acquaintance with these then remote regions had supplied our partisan with an abundance of facts, as well in regard to persons as to places. He showed very clearly that he knew his subjects thoroughly, and his report was comparatively a correct one; only so much varied, here and there, as more and more to impress the commandant with the importance of his own influence, and the necessity of giving it the fullest countenance. The particular purpose on which he came was in a fair

way to be satisfied. Balfour promised him all the necessary supplies, perfectly delighted with his zeal, his shows of intelligence, however rudely displayed; for Singleton, with the assumption of the hardy character of the backwoodsman, was specially mindful of all those peculiarities of the character he had adopted which were likely to arrest the attention of the Briton. His letters to General Williamson, from certain well-known leaders among the mountain-loyalists, were all freely placed under Balfour's examination, and the latter was at length pleased to say that Williamson would meet with our partisan at the "Quarter" or the Eight-Mile House—contiguous places of resort on the road from Charleston—without the latter being required to expose himself to the dangers of the small-pox in that city; for which the supposed loyalist continued to express the most shuddering horror and aversion. These matters were all adjusted before the departure of the commandant for the capital—an event which followed the next day.

Katharine Walton, in the meantime, had already taken her departure, with the excellent Miss Barbara; travelling under an escort of a few dragoons, in the family carriage, drawn by the only horses of any value which had been left by Colonel Walton, or Singleton, upon the estate. It was during the pursuit of her father by her lover that she had been sent away to the city; and though her absence, on his return, had dashed his spirits with a certain degree of melancholy, yet he felt that it was really for the best; since, to have seen her under constraint, and subject to various annoyances, at the hands of their common enemy, without power to interfere, was only matter of perpetual mortification to himself. But when, again, he reflected upon the sudden, undisguised, and passionate admiration which Balfour had shown for her, a momentary chill seized upon his heart; but, to dispel this, it was only necessary to recall the high qualities, the superior tone, the known courage and devotion of his cousin, and his thorough conviction of her faith to himself, under all privations, to restore his equanimity and make him confident of the future. He saw Balfour depart the next day without apprehension. Cruden remained upon the plantation, having with him a small guard. He was joined by his nephew, Major

Proctor, whose assistance he needed in making a necessary inventory of all the effects upon the estate.

Singleton was, at first, rather shy of the acquaintance of one whom he knew to be a rival, though an unsuccessful one; and he was not entirely assured that the other had not enjoyed such a sufficient view of him on a previous and memorable occasion, when they were actually in conflict, as to recognise him through all his present disguises. But this doubt disappeared after they had been together for a little while; and, once relieved from this apprehension, our partisan freely opened himself to the advances of the other. Proctor was of a manly, frank, ingenuous nature, not unlike that of Singleton, though with less buoyancy of temper, and less ductility of mood. Though grave, and even gloomy at moments, as was natural to one in his present position of partial disgrace, the necessities of his nature led him to seek the society of a person who, like Singleton, won quickly upon the confidence. The young men rode or rambled together, and, in the space of forty-eight hours, they had unfolded to their mutual study quite enough of individual character, and much of each individual career, to feel the tacit force of an alliance which found its source in a readily-understood sympathy.

Youth is the season for generous confidences. It is then only that the heart seeks for its kindred, as if in a first and most necessary occupation. It was easy with our partisan to develop his proper nature, his moods, tastes, and impulses, without endangering his secret, or betraying any more of his history than might properly comport with his situation. And this was quite satisfactory to Proctor. It was enough for him that he found a generous and sympathizing spirit, who could appreciate his own and feel indignant at his humiliations; and he failed to discover that the revelations of Singleton were not of a sort to involve many details, or exhibit anything, indeed, of his outer and real life. He himself was less cautious. The volume of indignation, long swelling in his bosom, and restrained by constant contact with those only of whom he had just need to be suspicious, now poured itself forth freely in expression, to the great relief of his heart, when he found himself in the company of one whom he perceived to be genial as a man, and whose

affinities, of a political sort, if they inclined him to the British cause, were yet but seldom productive of any social affinities between the parties. The provincials had been quite too long a subject of mock to the hirelings and agents of the crown, to respect them for anything but the power which they represented; and Proctor, who had long seen the error of the social policy of his countrymen, had always been among the few who had sought quite as much to conciliate as conquer. Still, the conversation of the two seemed studiously to forbear the subjects which were most interesting to both. They hovered about their favorite topics, and flew from them as eagerly as the lapwing from the nest which the enemy appears to seek.

It was at the close of the second day of their communion that the game was fairly started. The two dined with Cruden, and during the repast, the latter frequently dwelt upon Proctor's situation; the evident disposition of Balfour to destroy him, in spite of the ties of interest which had attached the uncle to himself; and the commissioner of confiscated estates finally lost himself in the bewildering conjectures by which he endeavored to account for the antipathy of the commandant. Singleton, of course, was a silent listener to all the conversation. It was one in which he did not feel himself justified in offering any opinions; but when Cruden had retired to his *siesta*—the afternoon being warm and oppressive—the two young men still lingered over their wine, and the conversation, freed from the restraining presence of one who could command their deference, but not their sympathies, at once assumed a character of greater freedom than before. Their hearts warmed to each other over the generous Madeira which had ripened for twenty years in the attic of "The Oaks," and all that was phlegmatic in the nature of Proctor melted before its influence and the genial tone of our partisan.

"You have heard my excellent uncle," he said, as he filled his beaker and passed the decanter to his companion. "He sees and avows his conviction that Balfour is preparing to destroy me, not through any demerits of mine, but in consequence of some secret cause of hostility; yet he says not a word of his readiness to take peril upon himself on my behalf, and is pre-

pared, I perceive, to yield me to my fate—to suffer me to be disgraced for ever, rather than break with the selfish scoundrel whose alliance he finds profitable. One might almost doubt, from what he daily sees, if there be not something in the ties of kindred which makes most of the parties confound them with bonds, which the heart feels to be oppressive, because they are natural and proper. I have found it so always.”

“Your indignation probably makes you unjust. Colonel Cruden evidently feels your situation seriously. The whole of his conversation to-day was devoted to it.”

“Ay: but with how many reproaches intermingled, how many doubts as to the cause of offence which I have given, how many covert suspicions; all of which are meant to prepare the way to my abandonment. I see through his policy. I know him better than you. He would, no doubt, save me and help me, if he could do so without breaking with Balfour, or endangering his own interests; but he will take no risks of this or any sort. His whole counsel goes to persuade me to make my submission to Balfour—to follow his own example, and surrender my pride, my personal independence, and all that is precious to a noble nature, to a selfish necessity, whose highest impulses sound in pounds, shillings, and pence. This I can not and will not do, Furness. Let me perish first!”

“But how have you lost the favor of Balfour?”

“I never had it. I rose to my present rank in the army without his help. No one receives his succor without doing base service for it. I have withheld this service, and I presume this is one of the causes of his antipathy.”

“Scarcely: or he would not have suffered you to hold position so long.”

“There you mistake. As long as Cornwallis was in Charleston, or Clinton, I was secure. From the one I received the appointments and promotion which the other confirmed. Besides, Balfour needed some pretext before he could remove me, and time was necessary to mature this pretext. I am the victim of a conspiracy.”

Proctor then proceeded to give a brief history of his career and command in Dorchester, and of that rescue of Colonel Wal

ton at the place of execution, of which Singleton knew much more than himself.

“But this Captain Vaughan, of whom you have spoken,” said Singleton, “what has prompted him to become the agent of Balfour in this business?”

“Major Vaughan!” retorted the other, bitterly. “He rises to my rank in the moment of my downfall. I am not sure that he is simply the agent of Balfour. I have reason to think that he has motives of hostility entirely his own. It might be a sufficient reason to suppose that to succeed to my place would be motive quite enough for a spirit at once base and ambitious. But, in the case of Vaughan, such a conjecture would not be entirely satisfactory. Vaughan really possesses character. He has courage, but without magnanimity. His pride, which is unrelieved by generosity, would perhaps discourage a baseness which had its root only in his desires to rise. Though ambitious enough, his ambition does not assume the character of a passion, and is anything but ardent and impetuous. Hate, perhaps—”

“Why should he hate you?”

“That is the question that I have vainly sought to answer. Yet I have the assurance that he *does* hate me with the most intense bitterness, and there is that in his deportment, during our whole intercourse, which tends to confirm this representation.”

“From whom does your knowledge come on this subject?”

“Even that I cannot answer you. There is a mystery about it; but if you will go with me to my room, I will show you the sources of my information. Fill your glass—we have seen the bottom of the decanter, and I must drink no more. But if you—”

Singleton disclaimed any desire for a protracted sitting, and the two adjourned to Proctor’s apartment. Here he produced from his trunk a packet of letters. From these he detached a couple of notes, delicately folded, and of small form, such as ladies chiefly delight to frame. These, according to their dates, he placed before the partisan.

“The first was received,” he said, “a day before Vaughan was appointed to a post under me at Dorchester. Read it.”

The note was brief, and ran thus:—

“Major Proctor will beware. In the person of Captain Vaughan he will find an enemy—a man who hates him, and who will seek or make occasion to do him evil. “A FRIEND.

“*Charleston, May 10.*”

“Three weeks ago,” said Proctor, “this followed it.”

He himself read the second epistle, and then handed it to Singleton. Its contents were these:—

“Major Proctor has been heedless of himself. He has had the warning of one who knew his danger. He has not regarded it. The serpent has crept to his bosom. He is prepared to sting—perhaps his life, most certainly his honor. Let him still be vigilant, and something may yet be done for his security. But the enemy has obtained foothold; he has spread his snares; he is busy in them still. Captain Vaughan is in secret correspondence with Colonel Balfour; and Major Proctor is beloved by neither. Shall the warnings of a true friend and a devoted faith be uttered in his ears in vain?”

“These are in a female hand,” said Singleton.

“Yes; but that does not prove them to be written by a female.”

“Not commonly, I grant you; but in this instance I have no question that these notes were penned by a woman. The characters are natural, and such as men can not easily imitate. They betray a deep and loyal interest. It is evident that the heart speaks here in the letters, even if not in the language. That they are slightly disguised, is in proof only of what I say; since the disguise is still a feminine one. Have you no suspicion?”

“None.”

“What says Colonel Cruden?”

“Would I show them to him? No—no! He could not comprehend the feeling which would make me, though I know nothing of the writer, shrink and blush to hear them ridiculed.”

Singleton mused in silence for a while. Proctor continued:

“I have no sort of clew to the writer. I can form no conjectures. I know no handwriting which this resembles. I have racked my brain with fruitless guesses.”

"Have you no female acquaintance in the city by whom they might have been written?"

"None," answered the major, somewhat hastily. "I formed few intimates in Charleston. The rebel ladies would have nothing to say to us, and the others did not seem to me particularly attractive."

"But you were in society?"

"But little: a few parties at private houses, a public ball of Cornwallis's, and some others, in which I walked the rooms rather as a spectator than as a guest. I am quite too earnest a man to feel much at home in mixed assemblages."

Singleton mused before he rejoined—

"You have, I should say, made more impression than you think for. These notes, I am confident, were written by a female. She is evidently warmly interested in your safety and success. She is apparently familiar with the affairs of Balfour, even those which are most secret; and that she has not conjectured idly, is proved by the correct result of her suggestions. You have verified the truth of her warnings. She is evidently, as she styles herself, a friend. The friendship of women means always something more than friendship. Her sympathies belong to the impulses, rather than the thoughts; to the policy or necessities, rather than the tastes of the individual: though these are necessarily a part of the influences which govern the policy. In plain terms, Proctor, you have made a conquest without knowing it."

"Scarcely. I can think of no one."

"That only proves that the lady has been less successful than yourself, and that your vanity has not been actively at work while you lounged through the fair assemblies of the city. But this aside. In the facts I have enumerated, are probably to be found all the clues to your mysterious informant. She is a woman; she has some mode of reaching the secrets of Balfour, and of fathoming the secret hostility which she evidently indicates as personal on the part of Vaughan. With these clues, can you make no progress?"

"None. I have invariably gone upon the presumption that the writer was of the masculine gender. I am not sure that I

should be nigher to a discovery were I to adopt your notion of the other. And yet, the secrets of Balfour are much more likely to be fathomed by a woman than a man. His character, among the sex, you know; and there are some in Charleston who have considerable power over him. But, woman or man, the writer of these billets has spoken the words of sober truth. I have experienced the importance of her warnings, and may realize the fruits which she predicts and fears. The hate of this man, Vaughan, has been long apparent to me. How he works is the problem which I have yet to fathom. There is one thing, however, which is certain, that I now feel for him as fervent a hate as he can possibly entertain for me. There are some passages already between us of an open character, of which I can take notice; and, though our acquaintance is so recent, I know no one upon whom I can more properly rely than yourself to bring about an issue between us."

"A personal one?"

"Surely! The feeling that separates us once understood, I am for an open rupture and the last extreme. I can not consent daily to meet the man who hates, and who labors to destroy me, wearing a pacific aspect, and forbearing the expression of that hostility which is all the time working in my soul. Colonel Cruden will leave 'The Oaks' in three days. I will linger behind him; and, if you will bear my message to Major Vaughan, I shall consider it one of those acts of friendship to be remembered always."

"He will scarce accept your challenge now. His duties will justify him in denying you."

"Perhaps; but for a season only. At all events, I shall have relieved my breast of that which oppresses it. I shall have declared my scorn and hate of my enemy. I shall have flung in his teeth my gauntlet of defiance, and declared the only terms which can in future exist between us. You will bear my message, Furness?"

"My dear Proctor, I am but a provincial captain of loyalists, one whom your regular soldiery are but too apt to despise. Will it not somewhat hurt your cause to employ me as your friend in

such a matter? Were it not better to seek some friend among your own countrymen in the garrison?"

"Do not desert—do not deny me!" exclaimed the young man, warmly and mournfully. "I have no friend in the garrison. It is filled with the tools of Balfour, or the tools of others; and scarcely one of them would venture, in the fear of the commandant's future hostility, to hear my message to his creature. I am alone! You see, my own kinsman prepares to abandon my cause at the first decent opportunity. Do not *you* abandon me. I have been won to you as I have been won to few men whom I have ever met. I have opened to you the full secrets of my heart. Say to me, Furness, that you will do me this service. Let me not think that I can not, on the whole broad face of God's earth, summon one generous spirit to my succor in this hour of my extremity."

"I will be your friend, Proctor; I will stand by you in the struggle, and see you through this difficulty," was the warm effusion of Singleton as he grasped the hand of his companion. "I take for granted that Vaughan cannot fight you while in command at Dorchester; but I concur with you that the more manly course is to let him understand at once the terms between you, and obtain from him a pledge to give you notice whenever he shall be at liberty to afford you redress. I will ride over to Dorchester to-morrow."

"Here's my hand, Furness; I have no spoken thanks. But you have lessened wondrously the sense of isolation here at my heart. I shall love you for this warmth and willingness for ever;" and he wrung the hand which he grasped with a passion almost convulsive.

He might well do so. He little knew the extent of the concession which had been made him; how many old and not quite dead and buried jealousies had to be overcome; nor in what various involvements the pliancy of the unsuspected American partisan might subject the counterfeit loyalist. Had he known! But he had no suspicions, and he now gave way to a buoyancy of mood that seemed to make him forgetful of all enemies.

"We must have a bumper together, my friend! What say you? Come! To the hall, once more; and then, if you please,

for a canter. There are some lively drives in this neighborhood among these glorious old-oaks, which I fear I shall seldom take again with the feelings and the hopes which possessed me once. You saw Miss Walton yesterday?"

The question was put abruptly. The blood suddenly flushed the face of the partisan; but he answered promptly and innocently—

“Oh yes; I saw her.”

“A most noble creature! Ah, Furness, that is a woman whom a man might love and feel his dignity ennobled rather than depressed; and it should be properly the nature of the marriage tie always to produce such effects. But come! She is not for us, I fear, my dear fellow.”

Singleton did not venture to answer; but he could not quite suppress the smile which would gleam out in his eyes and quiver on his lips, faintly, like an evening sunbeam on the leaves. It escaped the observation of his companion, who, putting his arm affectionately through that of his newly-found friend, hurried him back to the dining-room. They did not resume their seats at the table; but filled their glasses at the sideboard, and were just about to drink, when the trampling of a horse's feet was heard suddenly at the entrance. The door was opened a moment after, and who should appear before them but the identical Major Vaughan who had so greatly formed the subject of their recent deliberations.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BLADES CROSS.

THE parties did not readily distinguish each other. The window blinds had been drawn, to shut out the fierce glare of the evening sun, and the room was in that partial darkness which rendered objects doubtful except by a near approach. It was only when Vaughan had advanced into the centre of the room, and within a few steps of the spot where Proctor stood, his glass still raised in his hand, but drained of its contents, that the latter perceived his enemy. To fling the goblet down upon the sideboard, and rapidly to confront the visiter, was with Proctor the work of an instant. His movements were quite too quick to suffer Singleton to interpose; and, not having yet discovered who the stranger was, he did not in the slightest degree anticipate the movements or suspect the feelings of his companion. Nor was he aware, until this moment, that the Madeira which Proctor had drunk was rather more than his brain could well endure.

In those days, every man claiming the respect of his neighbors for even an ordinary amount of manhood, was supposed to be equal to almost any excess in drinking. Our young friends had, perhaps, really indulged to no excess beyond the more moderate practice of present times. Singleton, in fact, was as clear-headed and as cool at this moment as at any period of his life. He had drunk but little; and though Proctor might have gone somewhat beyond him, the quantity taken by both would probably not have annoyed any veteran. But Proctor was one of those persons who suddenly fall a victim; who will be perfectly sober, apparently, at one moment, and in the very next

will show themselves unmanageable. Not knowing this, and not suspecting the character of the new-comer, Singleton beheld the sudden movement of his companion without the slightest apprehension of the consequences. He was not left long in doubt upon either subject. In the twinkling of an eye, Proctor had confronted his enemy. Their persons were almost in contact—Vaughan drawing himself up quietly, but not recoiling, as Proctor approached him. The salutation of the latter, as well as his action, was of a sort to warn him of the open hostility which was henceforth to exist between them.

“You are come, sir! Oh! you are welcome! You come at the right moment! We have just been talking of you.”

“I am honored, sir,” was the cold response.

“Never a truer word from a false tongue?” was the savage reply.

“False!” exclaimed Vaughan; “false, sir!”

“Ay, ay, sir; false—false! I have said it, Captain Vaughan—pardon me, *Major* Vaughan. It were scarcely fair to deny you the price of your treachery. Judas *did* receive his thirty pieces of silver; and you have your promotion and the post of Dorchester. Major Vaughan, you are a scoundrel!”

Vaughan grew black in the face, and clapped his hand upon his sword. By this time, Singleton interposed.

“You are drunk,” said Vaughan, very coolly, releasing the weapon from his grasp.

“Drunk!” was the furious response of Proctor; and the utmost efforts of Singleton could scarcely keep him, though totally unarmed, from taking his enemy by the throat.

“Drunk! By heavens, you shall answer for this among your other offences!”

“I am ready to do so at the proper season,” said the other; “but it will be for me to determine when that season shall be. At present, I am on a duty which forbids that I prefer my personal affair to that of my sovereign. I would see Colonel Cruden.”

“How many scoundrels shelter themselves from danger by that plea of duty! You come to see Colonel Cruden! You shall see him, most dutiful subject of a most generous sovereign;

but you shall first see me. You know me, Major Vaughan; you know that I am not one to be put off in the just pursuit of my redress. Do you deny, sir, that you have wronged me—that you have defamed me to our superiors—that you have secretly lied away my fame? Speak! Do you deny these things? And if you deny not, are you prepared to atone?"

"I have no answer for you, sir. You are not in a condition to merit or to understand an answer."

Singleton interposed.

"That *may* be true, Major Vaughan. My friend Major Proctor has suffered his indignation to get the better of his caution; but I believe that I am calm, sir; and, as he has confided to me, as his friend, the cause of his complaint against you, let me entreat you to a moment's private conference with me. Proctor, leave us for a little while. Go to your chamber. I will see to this business. Leave it in my hands."

Casting a wolfish glance at his enemy, Proctor, after a moment's hesitation, prepared to obey the suggestion of his friend; and had already half crossed the apartment in the direction of his chamber, when the reply of Vaughan to Singleton recalled him.

"And pray, sir, who are you?" was the inquiry of the British officer, in tones of the coolest insolence.

Singleton felt the sudden flush upon his face; but he had his faculties under rare command.

"I am one, sir, quite too obscure to hope that my name has ever reached the ears of Major Vaughan; but in the absence of other distinctions, permit me to say that my claims to his attention are founded upon an honorable, though obscure position, and a tolerable appreciation of what belongs to a gentleman. I am known, sir, as Captain Furness, of the loyalists."

"It is certainly something new that a British officer should seek his friend in a provincial. It would seem to argue something in his own position which denied him a proper agent among his own rank and order. But you will excuse me, Captain Furness, of the loyalists, if I refuse to listen to you in your present capacity. I need not inform a gentleman of so much experience as yourself that, charged as I am with the duties of the post of

Dorchester, I cannot so far forget myself as to suffer my personal affairs to take the place of those of my sovereign. What I may do or undertake hereafter, how far I may be persuaded to listen to the demands of Major Proctor, made in a different manner and under other circumstances, must be left to my own decision. For the present, sir, I must decline your civilities as well as his. Suffer me to leave you, if you please."

The whole manner of Vaughan was insupportably offensive to say nothing of his language, which indirectly reflected upon the provincial character in a way to render Singleton almost as angry as Proctor. He inwardly resolved that the insolent Briton should answer to himself hereafter; but with a strong will he restrained any ebullition of feeling, and put upon his temper a curb as severe as that with which Vaughan evidently subdued his own. He felt that, dealing with one who was clearly quite as dextrous as cool, nothing but the exercise of all his phlegm could possibly prevent the enemy from increasing the advantage which the wild passions of Proctor had already afforded him. His reply, accordingly, was carefully measured to contain just as much bitterness and sting as was consistent with the utmost deliberateness and calm of mood.

"Were you as solicitous, Major Vaughan, to forbear offence as you evidently are to avoid responsibility, I might give you credit for a degree of Christian charity which one scarcely concedes to a British soldier."

"Sir!"

"Suffer me to proceed. In affairs of honor, if I sufficiently understand the rules which regulate them, it is a new ground of objection which urges a provincial birthplace as an argument against the employment of a friend. The truly brave man, anxious to do justice and accord the desired redress, makes as few objections as possible to the mere auxiliaries in the combat. What you have said sneeringly in regard to our poor provincials, was either said by way of excusing yourself from the combat on the score of something disparaging in the relation between my principal and myself, or——"

"By no means," replied the other, quickly. "I am certainly willing to admit that a principal may employ whom he pleases,

so that he be one to whom the social world makes no objection."

"On one point you have relieved me," replied Singleton quietly; "but there is another. I was about to say that your language, in reference, to the employment of a provincial as his friend by my principal, was either meant to evade the conflict——"

"Which I deny."

"Or was designed as a gratuitous sarcasm upon the class of people to whom I have the honor to belong."

Vaughan was evidently annoyed. Singleton's cool, deliberate mode of speaking was itself an annoyance; and the horns of the dilemma, one of which he had evaded without anticipating the other, left him without an alternative. Proctor, meanwhile, had hung about the parties, occasionally muttering some savage commentary upon the dialogue; but, with a returning consciousness of propriety, without seeking to take any part in it. When, however, the conversation had reached the point to which Singleton had brought it, he could not forbear the remark——

"Something of a dilemma, I should think—the horns equally sharp, and the space between quite too narrow for the escape of a very great man. A poor devil might squeeze through, and nobody note the manner of his escape; but for your swollen dignitaries, your people who read Plutarch, and, ambitious like the son of Ammon, refuse the contest unless kings are to be competitors, escape from such horns is next to impossible, unless by a sudden shrinking of the mushroom dignities. Furness, why were you born a buckskin?"

The fierce dark eyes of Vaughan, now singularly contracted by the closing of the brows above, were turned slowly and vindictively upon the speaker, the change in whose proceedings, tone, and manner, had been singularly great in the space of a few minutes. It would seem as if Proctor, now conscious of having blundered by his previous loss of temper, had by a resolute effort, subdued his passion into scorn, and substituted sarcasm for violence. At all events, the change was no less surprising to Singleton than to Vaughan, whose eyes now glanced from one to the other of the parties, with something of the expression of the wild boar about to be brought to bay. But he never lost

his composure. Indeed, he felt that it was his only security. Yet his annoyance was not the less at the predicament to which Singleton had reduced him by his brief but sufficient examination of his language. It would have been the shortest way to have boldly defied his new assailant, to have continued to deal in the language of scorn and sarcasm, and shelter himself under the habitual estimate which the British made of the native loyalists; but there were several reasons why he should not venture on this course. To deal in the language of violence and defiance, while pleading duty against the dangerous issues which it involved, was too manifest an inconsistency; and, at this juncture, tutored by frequent and severe experience, to say nothing of the necessities of the British cause, the positive instructions of the royal commanders everywhere were to conciliate, by all possible means, the sympathies and affections of such of the natives as had shown, or were likely to show, their loyalty. Vaughan felt the difficulties of his situation, which his pride of stomach necessarily increased. He found it easier to evade than to answer the supposed loyalist.

“I see, sir, that your object is to force a quarrel upon me, at the very moment when I tell you that the service of his majesty denies that I shall answer your demands.”

“Did I not tell you what an unprincipled knave it was?” said Proctor.

“You are scarcely ingenuous, Major Vaughan,” was the reply of Singleton; “and I forbear now what I should say, and what I will take occasion to say hereafter, in regard to the responsibilities which you plead. My *own* account with you must be left to future adjustment; but, in this affair of my friend, you can, at all events, leave us to hope that you will seek an early period to give him the interview which you now deny. We accept your plea of *present* duty. We are willing to acknowledge its force; and all that we now ask is that you give us your pledge to answer to his requisition at the earliest possible moment.”

“I will not be bullied, sir, into any promises,” was the brutal yet deliberate reply.

“Bullied, sir!” exclaimed Singleton.

“Ay, sir; I say bullied! I am here set upon by two of you, when I have no friend present, and at a moment which finds me unprepared; and will not be forced into pledges which it may be a large concession of my dignity and character to keep hereafter. Were I to consent to such a requisition as your principal makes, I should be only affording him an opportunity of bolstering up, at my expense, a reputation which is scarcely such, at this moment, as to deserve my attention. It will be——”

“Do you hear the scoundrel!” was the furious interposition of Proctor. “There is but one way, Furness, with a knave like this! Coward!” he cried, springing upon the other as he spoke, “if your sword will not protect your plumage, the subject of my reputation is out of place upon your lips!”

With these words, with a single movement, he tore the epaulet from the shoulders of his enemy. In an instant the weapon of Vaughan flashed in the air, and, almost in the same moment, Proctor tore down his own sword, which, with that of Singleton, was hanging upon the wall. The blades crossed with the rapidity of lightning, and, before our partisan could interfere, that of Vaughan had drawn blood from the arm of his opponent. Goaded as he had been, the commander of the post at Dorchester was still much the cooler of the combatants. His coolness was constitutional, and gave him a decided advantage over his more impetuous assailant.

But they were not permitted to finish as they had begun. In another moment, Colonel Cruden rushed into the apartment, still enveloped in his dressing-gown, but with his drawn sword in his hand. In the same instant, having possessed himself of his own weapon, Singleton beat down those of the combatants, and passed between them with the action and attitude of a master.

“How now!” cried Cruden, “would you butcher an officer of his majesty in my very presence? Two of you upon a single man!”

“You see!” said Vaughan, with bitter emphasis.

“You have lied!” was the instant, but quietly stern whisper of Singleton in his ears. The other started slightly, and his lips were closely compressed together.

“You show yourself too soon, my uncle,” cried Proctor; “we

were engaged in the prettiest *passa-témpo*. I was teaching our young friend here, the new major in command at Dorchester, a new *stoccáta*, which is particularly important, by way of finish to his other accomplishments. You will admit that one so expert in stabbing with tongue and pen ought not to be wanting in the nobler weapon whose use may at least atone for the abuse of his other instruments."

"I will admit nothing! You are a rash young man, headstrong, and bent on your own ruin. I would have saved you in spite of yourself. But this conduct is too outrageous. This assault upon my guest, and a royal officer in the prosecution of his duties, cannot be passed over. I abandon you to your fate!"

"Said I not, Furness? The very words! I saw it all. Nevertheless, my uncle, you owe me thanks for so soon affording you an opportunity of satisfying your desire, and accomplishing your purpose."

"What purpose?"

"That of abandoning me to my fate."

"Go to! You are mad. Captain Furness, why do I see you in this quarrel?"

"You do *not* see me in this quarrel, Colonel Cruden, except as a mediator. My sword was only drawn to beat down their opposing weapons; though Major Vaughan, it seems, counselled perhaps only by his apprehensions, would make it appear that it was drawn against him."

Vaughan contented himself with giving Singleton a single look, in which malignity contended on equal terms with scorn and indifference. But the latter feelings were rather expressed than felt. The young men knew each other as enemies.

"Let me hear no more of this matter, gentlemen. As for you, John"—to Proctor—"this last outrage compels me to tell you that I will countenance you in none of your excesses. Do not look for my support or protection. That you should have broken through all restraints of reason, at the very moment when your friends were most anxiously revolving in what mode to save you from former errors, is most shameful and astonishing. I give you up. There is no saving one who is bent on destroying himself."

"Nay, uncle, do not sacrifice yourself in my behalf. I well know how ready you have been to do so on all previous occasions. Make no further sacrifice, I pray you. And pray entreat my friends not to suffer their anxieties to make them pale on my account. I would not have them lose an hour of sleep, however much I suffer. See to it, uncle: will you? I am more concerned in respect to yourself than any of the rest."

"Come with me, Major Vaughan. These young men have been drinking. Let that be their excuse."

The two left the room together.

"Friends! Oh, friends!—excellent friends! Ha! ha! ha!"

The excited mood of Proctor spoke out in the bitterest mockery. Singleton remembered what he had said before on the subject of his uncle's selfishness, and his own isolation. He understood all the secret anguish that was preying on a generous nature in a false position, and denied all just sympathies. He felt too warmly for the sufferer not to forgive the rashness to which his secret sufferings had goaded him.

"Proctor, you bleed."

"Do I? Where?"

"In your arm."

"Is it possible I was hit? I never felt it."

"You would scarcely have felt it had the sword gone through your heart."

"I almost wish it had, Furness! The wound is there, nevertheless."

"Nay, nay! that will heal. Let me see to the arm. Experience and necessity have made me something of a surgeon."

With tenderness, and not a little skill, Singleton dressed the wound, which was slight, though it bled quite freely. This done, he said—

"Proctor, this man is more than a match for you."

"What! at the small-sword?"

"No; in point of temper. He is cool-headed and cold-hearted. His nerves are not easily shaken, and he has his blood under excellent command. He will always foil you—he will finally conquer in the struggle—unless you put yourself under a more severe training than any to which you have ever

subjected yourself. You will have to learn the lesson to subdue yourself to your necessities. Till a man does this, he can do nothing. I can readily conjecture that the subtlety of this man has, in some way, enmeshed you. I have no doubt that you are in his snares; and I foresee that, like a spider, confident in the strength of his web, he will lie *perdu* until you exhaust yourself in vain struggles, and when fairly exhausted and at his mercy, he will then administer the *coup de grace*."

"What! are you my friend, yet paint me such a humiliating picture!"

"It is because I am your friend, and deeply sympathize with you, that I have drawn this picture. It is necessary to make you shudder at what you may reasonably apprehend, or you will never learn the most important of all lessons in such a conflict—not to shrink or startle because you suffer; not to speak out in passion because you feel; and never to show your weapon until you are fully prepared to strike. The subtlest scheme of villany may be foiled, if we only bide our time, keep our temper, and use the best wits that God has given us. For villany has always some weak place in its web. Find out *that*, and there will be little difficulty in breaking through it. Do you believe me?—do you understand me?"

"Ah, Furness! I would I had such a friend as you in the city. It is there that the struggle must be renewed."

"I have a friend there, to whom I will commend you; a rare person, and an old one. But of this hereafter. It is not too late for our proposed canter. Let us ride, if for an hour only, and get ourselves cool."

CHAPTER XIII.

SCOUTING AND SENTIMENT.

THE two friends rode together for an hour or more, until the night came down and counselled their return. They pursued the great road below, leading down the Ashley, and unfolding, at every mile in their progress, the noble avenues of oak conducting to those numerous stately abodes along the river, which rendered it, in that day, one of the most remarkable spots for wealth and civilization which was known in the whole country. Some of these places were still held by their owners, who had temporized with the invader, or, being females or orphans, had escaped his exactions. Others, like "the Oaks," were in the hands of the sequestrator, and managed by his agents. The mood of Proctor did not suffer him to pay much regard to the prospect, though, under auspices more grateful to his feelings, he had felt it a thousand times before. He had ridden along this very road in company with Katharine Walton, at a period when his heart fondly entertained a hope that he might find some answering sympathy in hers. He had been painfully disabused of this hope, in the conviction that she was now betrothed irrevocably to another; but his mind, which was in that state when it seems to find a melancholy pleasure in brooding upon its disappointments, now reverted to this among the rest.

"I am a fated person, Furness. You have heard of men whom the world seems solicitous to thwart; whom Fortune goes out of her way to disappoint and afflict; who fall for ever just when they appear to rise, and who drink bitter from the cup in which they fancy that nothing but sweets have been allowed to mingle? I belong to that peculiar family!"

“Pardon me, Proctor, but I have little faith in this doctrine of predestination. That Fortune distributes her favors un-
equally, I can understand and believe. This is inevitable, from the condition of the race, from its very necessities, which make it important to the safety and progress of all that all should not be equally favored; and from those obvious discrepancies and faults in training and education, which move men to persevere in a conflict with their own advantages. But that Fortune takes a malicious pleasure in seeking out her victims, and defeating perversely the best plans of wisdom and endeavor, I am not ready to believe. In your case, I really see no occasion for such a notion. Here, while still a very young man, you have attained a very high rank in the British army—an institution notoriously hostile to sudden rise, or promotion, unless by favor.”

“And to what has it conducted me?” said the other, abruptly breaking in. “To comparative discredit; to temporary overthrow; and possibly, future shame. Certainly to an obscuration of hope and fortune.”

“Let us hope not—let us try that such shall not be the case. This despondency of mood is really the worst feature in your affairs.”

“Ah, you know not all! I hope to struggle through this affair of Dorchester. On that subject you have warned me to an effort which I had otherwise been scarcely prepared to make; and you have shown me clews which I shall pursue quite as much from curiosity as from any other feeling. If this affair were all! I asked you if you had seen Miss Walton? You will not be surprised to hear me say that I loved her from the first moment when I beheld her. I do not know that it will occasion any surprise when I tell you that I loved in vain.”

It did *not*; but of this Singleton said nothing.

“Pride, ambition, fortune, love, all baffled! Do you doubt that Fate has chosen me out as one of those victims upon whom she is pleased to exercise her experiments in malice? Yet all shone and seemed so promising at first.”

“But you are still at the beginning of the chapter, my dear fellow. Your life has scarce begun. The way is a long one yet before you. It will be strange, indeed, if it should long

continue clouded. You will recover position. You will detect and expose this Vaughan, and be restored to that rank in the army which you so eminently deserve. I say nothing of your *affaire de cœur*. The subject is, at all times, a delicate one. But is it so certain that your prospects with Miss Walton are entirely hopeless?"

The curiosity which Singleton expressed in his latter question is not without its apology. It would seem to be natural enough to a lover, whatever might be his own certainties on the score of his affections.

"On that subject say no more. She is betrothed to another. More than that, she truly loves him. It is not a passion of the day when the young heart, needing an object about which to expand, rather seeks than selects a favorite. She has made her choice deliberately, bringing her mind to co-operate with her heart, and her attachment is inflexible. This I know. She is a remarkable woman. Not a woman in the ordinary sense of the term. Not one of the class who readily reconcile themselves to events, who can accommodate their affections to their condition, and expend just so much of them upon their object as to maintain external appearances. Her heart goes thoroughly with her decision, and her will only follows her affections. But I tire you. You cannot feel greatly interested in one whom you so little know."

"But I *am* interested in the character you describe. More than that, I am interested in *you*. Follow your bent, and suppose me a willing listener."

"Nay, on this subject I will say no more. It is one which has its annoyances. My admiration of Miss Walton only makes me feel how greatly I have been a loser, and gives such an edge to my despondencies as to make me resigned to almost any fate. But you spoke of the army, and of my restoration to rank. On this point let me undeceive you. I have no longer any military ambition. The recovery of position is only important to me as a recovery of reputation. The stain taken from my name, and I sheathe my sword for ever. I am sick of war and bloodshed—particularly sick of *this* war, which I am ashamed of, and the favorable result of which I deem hopeless."

“Ha! how? Do you mean to the royal arms?”

“You are surprised. But such is even my thought. Great Britain is destined to lose her colonies. She is already almost exhausted in the contest. Her resources are consumed. Her debt is enormous. Her expenses are hourly increasing. She can get no more subsidies of men from Germany, and her Irish recruits desert her almost as soon as they reach America. Her ministers would have abandoned the cause before this, but for the encouragement held out by the native loyalists.”

“And they have taken up arms for the crown, only because they believed the cause of the colonies hopeless against the overwhelming power of the mother-country. Could they hold with you in our interior, the British cause would find no advocates.”

“They will hold with me as soon as the foreign supplies cease. Already they begin to perceive that they themselves form the best fighting materials of our armies.”

“Fighting with halts about their necks.”

“Precisely; but the moment they discover fully our weakness, they will make terms with the Revolutionary party, which will only be too ready to receive them into its ranks. I foresee all that is to happen, and the British ministry sees it also. Nothing but pride of stomach keeps them even now from those concessions which will prove inevitable in another campaign. They must have seen the hopelessness of the cause the moment that they found no party sufficiently strong, in any of the colonies, to control the progress of the movement. No people can be conquered by another, three thousand miles removed from the seat of action, so long as they themselves resolutely *will* to continue the conflict. The vast tract of sea which spreads between this country and Europe, is itself sufficient security. To transport troops, arms, and provisions, across this tract is, in each instance, equivalent to the loss of a battle. There is no struggle which could prove more exhausting in the end.”

“You hold forth but poor encouragement to our loyalist brethren,” said Singleton, with a smile scarcely suppressed.

“Hear me, Furness; I would say or do nothing which could injure the service in which I have hitherto drawn the sword.

My own loyalty, I trust, will always be unimpeachable; but, my friend, the regard which I feel for you prompts me to wish, for your own sake, that you had drawn the sword with your people rather than against them. The American loyalists must and will be abandoned to their fate. They will be the greatest losers in the contest. They will forfeit their homes, and their memories will be stained with reproach to the most distant periods. It is, perhaps, fortunate for them, as tending to lessen this reproach in the minds of all just persons, that the greater number of them, particularly in these southern colonies, are native Britons. It was natural that they should side with their natural sovereign. But, for the *natives* of the soil, there can be no such excuse. Abandoned by Great Britain, they will be doomed to an exile which will lack the consolations of those who can plead for their course, all the affinities of birth, and all the obligations of subjects born within the shadow of the throne. I would to God, for your sake, that you had been a foreigner, or had never drawn weapon against your people!"

How Singleton longed to grasp the hand of the speaker, and unfold to him the truth. But his secret was too precious to hazard, even in the hands of friendship; and quite too much depended on his present concealment to suffer him to give way to the honest impulse which would have relieved him of all discredit in the eyes of his companion.

"You have placed the subject under new lights before my eyes," was his answer. "It is something to be thought upon. That the British power has been weakened, that its capacity for conquest is greatly lessened, I have already seen; but I had no thought that such opinions were generally prevalent in your army."

"Nor do I say that they are. You will scarcely get Balfour to think as I do, even when the orders reach him for the evacuation of Charleston; and as for my excellent uncle, so long as his charge of confiscated estates increases, he will fancy that the game is just what it should be. But, to my mind, the event is inevitable. These colonies of Carolina and Georgia may be cut off from the confederacy; but even this estrangement must be temporary only. They, too, will be abandoned after a brief

experiment, and the independence of America will be finally and fully acknowledged. The war must have ceased long ago, and after a single campaign only, had it not been begun prematurely by the Americans. The colonies were not quite ready for the struggle. In a single decade more, the fruits would have been quite ripe; and it would only have required a single shaking of the tree. Then they would not have needed a French alliance. The native population would have been so greatly in the ascendant, that the foreign settlers would not have dreamed of any opposition to the movement."

"Our loyalists, according to your notions, have shown themselves unwise; but their fidelity, you will admit, is a redeeming something, which ought to secure them honorable conditions and against reproach."

"I am not so sure of that. The true loyalty is to the soil, or rather to the race. I am persuaded that one is never more safe in his principles than when he takes side with his kindred. There is a virtue in the race which strengthens and secures our own; and he is never more in danger of proving in the wrong than when he resolutely opposes himself to the sentiments of his people. At all events, one may reasonably distrust the virtue in his principle when he finds himself called upon to sustain it by actually drawing the sword against his kindred. But the subject is one to distress you, Furness, and I have no wish to do so. I have simply been prompted to speak thus plainly by the interest I take in your fortunes. Were I you, I should seek from Balfour an opportunity to exchange the service, and get a transfer to some of the British regiments in the West Indies."

"I shall live and die on my native soil," said the other, quickly. "If our cause fails I will perish with it."

"It *will* fail, Furness."

"Never! never!" was the emphatic reply.

"Let us change the subject," said the other. "Did you remark these pine woods as we passed them half an hour ago? What a grateful and delicate tint they wore in the evening sun! Can you conceive of anything more sombre than their gloomy shadows, *now*, in the dusky folds of evening! They stand up like so many melancholy spectres of glorious hopes which have

perished—gloomy memorials of joys and triumphs which the heart had dreamed in vain. Do you know that I could now, with a relish, penetrate these grim avenues, and lay myself down in the deepest part of the thicket, to muse, throughout the night, and night after night, with a sort of painful satisfaction!"

"I have mused and brooded under such shadows a thousand times, night and day, without a gloomy feeling—nay, with something of a joy that found its pleasure in due degree with the growth of its most melancholy emotions."

"The heart gives its character to the scene always. The genius of place is born always in the soul of the occupant. Mine is not a joyous spirit now, and I would embrace these shadows, if a thousand times more gloomy, as if they had been my kindred. But what is this that stirs? Ha! who goes there?"

At the challenge, a shadow dashed across the road; and Proctor, clapping spurs to his horse, with the old military feeling of suspicious watch and command, forced the animal forward in the direction of the fugitive; but he soon recoiled—with a sudden consciousness that he was totally unarmed—as he beheld, standing close by the road-side, and partly sheltered by a huge pine, the figure of a man with a musket already presented, and the eye of the stranger deliberately coursing along the barrel. At that moment, Singleton cried out—

"Hold up, my good fellow. Would you shoot us without giving the time of day?"

The stranger threw up his musket and brought the butt heavily upon the ground.

"There's no time of day," said he, with a chuckle, "when you are about to ride over a body."

The speaker came out from the shadow of the tree as he answered, with an air of unaffected confidence. He was dressed in the common blue homespun of the country; but his garments were of that mixed military and Indian character which denoted the forester or ranger of the period.

"Who are you?" demanded Proctor.

"My name's Futtrell, if that's what you want to know, and I'm from the Cypress. Have you seen, gentlemen, either on you, a stray sorrel nag, with a blaze in his face, and his left

foreleg white up to his knees? He's a right smart nag, and a little wild, that got off from the lot now two days ago; and was tracked down as far as Bacon's bridge, an thar we lost him."

This inquiry seemed to anticipate all questions; and, by this time, Proctor, remembering that he was no longer in command, felt no disposition to ask anything further. Having answered the question of the stranger in the negative, he was disposed to ride on; but by this time Mr. Futtrell was curiously examining the horse of Singleton.

"That's a mighty fine beast of yourn, stranger," he said, stroking the animal's neck and forelegs.

"You wouldn't like to buy him?" said Singleton, good-humoredly.

"That I should, stranger," replied the other, "if buying a horse meant taking him with a promise to pay when the skies should rain golden guineas."

"We are in danger of no such shower for some time to come, or from any quarter," said Proctor. "Let us ride, Furness."

And, as he spoke, the steed of the speaker went slowly ahead. At this moment, the stranger seized his opportunity to thrust a scrap of paper into the hands of Singleton, who stooped down to him and whispered a single sentence; then rode away to join his companion, who had perceived none of these movements.

"Dang it!" muttered Futtrell, looking after the two, "our colonel's just as full of stratagems as an egg's full of meat. Proctor was always reckoned a real keen fellow for an Englishman, yet the colonel goes into him as if he had a key for all the doors in his heart. Well, we shall know all about it, I reckon, before the night's over."

With these words, the stranger disappeared within the shadows of the wood, which, from this point, spread away, in unbroken depth and density, to the west—a continuous wall of thicket almost encircling the plantation of Colonel Walton, and forming a portion only of his extensive domain. The spot where our companions encountered Futtrell was scarcely half a mile from the mansion-house. The two former, meanwhile, made their way to "The Oaks" without further interruption.

When they reached the entrance of the dwelling, it was found that the servant of Major Proctor was not present, as was his custom, to receive his master's horse. A negro came forward and took that of Singleton.

Proctor was impatient, and began to clamor loudly for his fellow ; but the cry of " John—John ! what ho ! there —John ! " had scarcely been sounded a second time, when the person summoned—a short, squat, sturdy Englishman, with a red face—made his appearance, in a run, out of breath, and seemingly somewhat agitated by his exhaustion or his apprehensions. Proctor did not perceive his discomposure, but contented himself with administering a sharp rebuke for his absence and neglect. Singleton's eye was drawn to the fellow, and something in his appearance rendered our partisan distrustful for a moment ; but nothing was said, and he soon entered the dwelling with his companion.

Cruden was in waiting to receive them, and his manner was much more conciliatory and gracious than when they separated in the afternoon. He was governed by a policy, in this department, which will have its explanation hereafter. We need not bestow our attention upon the conversation which occupied the parties during the evening, as it was of that casual nature designed simply *pour passer le temps*, which need not employ ours. When Cruden retired, the young men were free to resume their conference, which, though it had regard to the subjects most interesting to them, and in some degree of interest to us, yet conducted to nothing more definite than we have already understood. They separated at a tolerably early hour, and Singleton retired to his chamber—but not to sleep. It will occasion no surprise when we find our partisan, at midnight, emerging stealthily from his apartment, and from the dwelling, and making his way secretly to the wood where he had encountered Futtrell. What he saw, whom he found, or what was done there, by himself or others, must be reserved for another chapter. We must not anticipate. It is sufficiently clear, however, that Singleton has not committed himself to the association with his enemies, without having friends at need, and within easy summons of his bugle.

CHAPTER XIV

CAMP-FIRES.

WHEN General Greene was despatched to the south, after the defeat of Gates at Camden, to take charge of the southern army, he found himself in a region of the world so utterly different from everything in his previous experience, that he was fain to acknowledge himself bewildered by what he saw, if not at a loss as to what he should undertake. According to his letters, he was in a country in which a general was "never at any moment quite secure from a capital misfortune." The difficulty was certainly a bewildering one, particularly where the generalship was of that inflexible sort which could not readily accommodate its strategy to novel circumstances and conditions. This was the peculiar deficiency of Gates, who, for example, because he had achieved the capture of Burgoyne, in a hilly and rather densely-settled country, without the aid of cavalry, hurried to the conclusion that he was equally independent of such an arm in a perfectly level and sparsely-settled region, where, in truth, cavalry should have been his most necessary dependence. Greene was not so stubborn; but his genius was still too much lacking in flexibility. His embarrassment, in the scene of his new operations, arose from the immense forests, the impervious swamps by which they were relieved and intersected, and the wonderful security in which a lurking enemy might harbor, within sight of the very smokes of the camp, without being suspected of any such near neighborhood. This, which was particularly true of the region of country watered by the Pedee, the Congaree, the Santee, and other leading arteries of the interior, was, in a measure, true also of the tracts lying along the Cooper and Ashley;

though portions of the lands which were watered by these streams had been, for a considerable space of time, under a high state of cultivation.

To those familiar with the country, even now, it will occasion no surprise to be told that the Carolina partisans were wont to penetrate with confidence between the several posts of the British throughout the colony, and to lie in wait for favorable opportunities of surprise and ambush, within the immediate vicinity of Charleston. A close thicket, a deep swamp skirting road or river, afforded, to a people familiar with these haunts, ample harborage even within five miles of the enemy's garrison; and the moment of danger found them quickly mounted on the fleetest steeds, and darting away in search of other places of refuge. We have seen with what audacity Colonel Walton ventured upon his own domain, though guarded by his foes, and under the very eye of the strong post of Dorchester. It will be easy to conceive that Singleton's troopers could find a secure place of hiding, indulging in a rational confidence, for days in this very neighborhood. Such was the case; and to one of these retreats we propose to conduct the reader, anticipating the approach of the commander of the party lying thus *perdu*.

About a mile west of the Ashley, and a few miles only below the British post at Dorchester, the explorer may even now penetrate to a little *bay*, or small bottom of drowned land, the growth of which, slightly interspersed with cypress and tupelo, is chiefly composed of that dwarf laurel called the *bay*, from which the spot, in the *parlance* of the country, derives its name. The immediate basin, or circuit of drowned land, retains to this moment its growth and verdure; but we look now in vain for the dense forest of oak, hickory, pine, ash, and other forest-trees, by which it was encircled, and under the shadows of which the partisans found their refuge in the days of the Revolution. These formed a venerable sanctuary for our foresters, and here, with an admirable *cordon* of videttes and sentries they made themselves secure against surprise, so long as they chose to keep their position. We need not describe the place more particularly. Most of our readers possess a sufficient general idea of the shadows and securities of such a spot; of its wild beauties, and the sweet

solemnity of its solitude. Let them take into view the near neighborhood of streams and rivers, girdled by dense swamp fastnesses, almost impenetrable, except by obscure and narrow avenues, known only to the natives of the country, and they will readily conceive the degree of security attainable by the partisan warrior, who is alert in his movements, and exercises an ordinary share of prudence and circumspection.

The spot which we now approach was quite familiar to the party by whom it is occupied. Most of them were born in the neighborhood, and accustomed from boyhood to traverse its shadowy passages. This will account for the confidence which they felt in making it their place of harborage, almost within cannon shot of the fortress of the enemy. The squad which Singleton had here placed in waiting was a small one, consisting of twelve or fifteen persons only. At the hour when he left "The Oaks" on foot, to visit them in their place of hiding, they were in expectation of his coming. Futtrell had returned, and apprized them of his whispered promise to that effect. A group of gigantic oaks surrounded their bivouac, their great branches glossily and always green, and draped with wide, waving streamers of venerable moss. The fires of the party were made up in a hollow formed by the gradual sloping of the earth from three several sides. This depression was chosen for the purpose, as enabling them the better to conceal the flame which, otherwise, gleaming through some broken places in the woods, might have conducted the hostile eye to the place of refuge. In this hollow, in sundry groups, were most of the party. Some sat or stood engaged in various occupations. Some lay at length with their feet to the fire, and their eyes, half shut, looking up at the green branches, or the starlighted skies overhead. One might be seen mending his bridle, close by the fire; another was drawing the bullet from his rifle, cleansing or burnishing it; and others were grouped, with heads together, in quiet discourse among themselves. Saddles lay close beneath the trees; cloaks, and coats, and bridles, depended from their branches; and several blankets hung down from similar supports, the use of which was obviously to assist in concealing the gleam of firelight from the eyes of the stranger in the distance.

One object in this enumeration should not be suffered to escape our attention. This was a great pile of canes, or reeds, of which the river swamps and lowlands throughout the country furnished an abundance, and which two of the younger persons of the party were busy in trimming of their blades and plumes, fashioning them into arrows of a yard long, and seasoning in the warm ashes of the fire. Feathers of the eagle, the crane, the hawk, and common turkey, a goodly variety, indeed, were crowded into a basket between the lads thus employed. With these they fitted the shafts, when ready in other respects; and bits of wire, and nails of wrought iron, rounded and sharpened with a file, were, with considerable dexterity, fitted into the heads of the shafts. The employment afforded a commentary on the emergencies of our war of independence, though it is still a question, whether the implements of the Indian warrior did not possess some advantages over those of civilization, which tended to lessen greatly the disparity between the several weapons. Of this matter something will be learned hereafter. Sheaves of arrows already prepared for use, and rude bows, made of white oak and ash, might be seen placed away in safety beneath the trees, among other of the munitions of the encampment; all of which betokened a rude but ready regard to the exigencies of warfare.

At a little distance from these parties and their tools, and on the opposite side of the fire, was a group of four persons, of whom nothing has yet been said. These were busy in preparations of another sort. The carcass of a fine buck lay between them, and two of the party were already preparing to cut him up. One of these persons with arms bare to the elbows, flourished a monstrous *couteau de chasse*, with the twofold air of a hero and a butcher. This was a portly person of the most formidable dimensions, with an abdominal development that might well become an alderman. He had evidently a taste for the work before him. How he measured the brisket! how he felt for the fat! with what an air of satisfaction he heaved up the huge haunches of the beast! and how his little gray eyes twinkled through the voluminous and rosy masses of his own great cheeks!

"I give it up!" he exclaimed to his companions. "There is no wound except that of the arrow, and it has fairly passed

through the body, and was broken by the fall. I give it up! I will believe anything wonderful that you may tell me. You may all lie to me in safety. I have no more doubts on any subject. Everything's possible, probable, true hereafter, that happens. But that you, such a miserable sapling of a fellow as you, Lance, should have sent this reed through such a beast—clean through—is enough to stagger any ordinary belief!"

The person addressed, a tall, slender lad, apparently not more than eighteen or nineteen, laughed good-naturedly, as, without other reply, he thrust forth his long, naked arm, and displayed, fold upon fold, the snaky ridges of his powerful muscles.

"Ay, I see you have the bone and sinew, and I suppose I must believe that you shot the deer, seeing that Barnett gives it up; but I suppose you were at butting distance. You had no occasion to draw bow at all. You used the arrow as a spear, and thrust it through the poor beast's vitals with the naked hand."

"Shot it, I swow, at full fifty-five yards distance! I stepped it off myself," was the reply of the person called Barnett.

"I give up! I will believe in any weapon that brings us such meat. Henceforth, boys, take your bows and arrows always. The Indian was a sensibler fellow than we gave him credit for. I never could have believed it till now; and when Singleton took it into his head to supply such weapons to our men, for the want of better, I thought him gone clean mad."

"Yet you heard his argument for it?" said Lance.

"No. I happen to hear nothing when I am hungry. I shouldn't hear you now, but for my astonishment, which got the better of my appetite for a few moments. I will hear nothing further. Use your knife, Lance; lay on, boy, and let's have a steak as soon as possible."

"Sha'n't we wait for the colonel?" said Lance.

"I wait for no colonels. I consider them when I consider the core (*corps*). What a glorious creature!—fat an inch thick, and meat tender as a dove's bosom! Ah, I come back to the Cypress a new man! Here I am at home. The Santee did well enough; but there's a sweetness, a softness, a plumpness, a beauty about bird and beast along the Ashley, that you find in the same animals nowhere else. God bless my mother!"

“For what, in particular, lieutenant?”

“That she chose it for my birthplace. I shouldn't have been half the man I am born anywhere else; shouldn't have had such discriminating tastes, such a fine appetite, such a sense of the beautiful in nature.”

And thus, talking and slashing, the corpulent speaker maintained the most unflagging industry, until the deer was fairly quartered, a portion transferred, in the shape of steaks, to the reeking coals; and the rest spread out upon a rude scaffolding to undergo the usual hunter-process of being cured, by smoking, for future use. The skin, meanwhile, was subjected to the careful cleansing and stretching of the successful hunter.

And then the whole party grouped themselves about the fire, each busy with his steak and hoe-cake. There was the redoubtable Lieutenant Porgy, and the youthful ensign, Lance Frampton, already known as the taker of the prey, and little Joey Barnett, and others, known briefly as Tom, Dick, and Harry; and others still, with their *noms de guerre*, such as Hard-Riding Dick, and Dusky Sam, and Clip-the-Can, and Black Fox, and Gray Squirrel: a merry crew, cool, careless, good-humored, looking, for all the world, like a gipsy encampment. Their costume, weapons, occupation; the wild and not ungraceful ease with which they threw their huge frames about the fire; the fire, with its great, drowsy smokes slowly ascending, and with the capricious jets of wind sweeping it to and fro amidst the circle; and the silent dogs, three in number, grouped at the feet of their masters, their great, bright eyes wistfully turned upward in momentary expectation of the fragment; all contributed to a picture as unique as any one might have seen once in merry old England, or, to this day, among the Zincafi of Iberia.

“Ah, this is life!” said Lieutenant Porgy, as he supplied himself anew with a smoking morsel from the hissing coals. “I can live in almost any situation in which man can live at all, and do not object to the feminine luxuries of city life, in lieu of a better; but there is no meat like this, fresh from the coals, the owner of which hugged it to his living heart three hours ago. One feels free in the open air; and, at midnight, under the trees, a venison steak is something more than meat. It is food for

thought. It provokes philosophy. My fancies rise. I could spread my wings for flight. I could sing—I feel like it now—and, so far as the will is concerned, I could make such music as would bring the very dead to life.”

And the deep, sonorous voice of the speaker began to rise, and he would have launched out into some such music as the buffalo might be supposed to send forth, happening upon a fresh green flat of prairie, but that Lance Frampton interposed, in evident apprehension of the consequences.

“Don’t, lieutenant; remember we’re not more than a mile from the river road.”

“Teach your grandmother to suck eggs! Am I a fool? Do I look like the person to give the alarm to the enemy? Shut up, lad, and be not presumptuous because you have shot a deer after the Indian fashion. Do you suppose that, even were we in safer quarters, I should attempt to sing with such a dry throat? I say, Hard-Riding Dick, is there any of that Jamaica in the jug?”

“It is a mere drop on a full stomach.”

“Bring it forth. I like the savor of the jug.”

And the jug was produced, and more than one calabash was seen elevated in the firelight; and the drop sufficed, in not unequal division, to improve the humor of the whole party.

“The supper without the song is more endurable,” was the philosophy of Porgy, “than the song without the supper. With the one before the other, the two go happily together. Now it is the strangest thing in the world that, with such a desperate desire to be musical, I should not be able to turn a tune. But I can *act* a tune, my lads, as well as any of you; and, as we are not permitted to give breath to our desires and delights, let us play round as if we were singing. You shall observe me, and take up the chorus, each. Do you understand me?”

“Can’t say I do,” said Futtrell. “Let’s hear.”

“You were always a dull dog, Futtrell, though you are a singer. Now, look you, a good singer or a good talker, an orator or a musician of any kind, if he knows his business, articulates nothing, either in song or speech, that he does not *look*, even while he speaks or sings. Eloquence, in oratory or in music.

implies something more than ordinary speech. It implies passion, or such sentiments and feelings as stir up the passions. Now every fool knows that, if we feel the passion, so as to speak or sing it, we must *look* it too. Do you understand me now?"

"I think I do," was the slowly uttered response of Futtrell, looking dubiously.

"Very well. I take it that all the rest do, then, since you are about the dullest dog among us," was the complimentary rejoinder. "Now, then, I am going to sing. I will sing an original composition. I shall first begin by expressing anxiety, uneasiness, distress; these are incipient signs of hunger, a painful craving of the bowels, amounting to an absolute gnawing of the clamorous inhabitants within. This is the first part, continued till it almost becomes despair; the music then changes. I have seen the boys bringing in the deer. He lies beneath my knife. I am prepared to slaughter him. I feel that he is secure. I see that he will soon be broiling in choice bits upon the fire. I am no longer uneasy or apprehensive. The feeling of despair has passed. All is now hope, and exultation, and anticipation; and this is the sentiment which I shall express in the second part of the music. The third follows the feast. Nature is pacified; the young wolf-cubs within have retired to their kennels. They sleep without a dream, and a philosophical composure possesses the brain. I meditate themes of happiness. I speculate upon the immortality of the soul. I enter into an analysis of the several philosophies of poets, prophets, and others, in relation to the employments and enjoyments of the future; and my song subsides into a pleasant murmuring, a dreamy sort of ripple, such as is made by a mountain brooklet, when, after wearisome tumbings from crag to crag, it sinks at last into a quiet and barely lapsing watercourse, through a grove, the borders of which are crowded with flowers of the sweetest odor. Such, boys, shall be my song. You will note my action, and follow it, by way of chorus, as well as you can."

All professed to be at least willing to understand him, and our philosopher proceeded. Porgy was an actor. His social talent lay in the very sort of amusement which he now proposed to them. He has himself described the manner of his perform-

ance in the declared design. We shall not attempt to follow him; but may say that scarcely one of those wildly-clad foresters but became interested in his dumb show, which at length, became so animated that he leaped to his feet, in order the better to effect his action, and was only arrested in his performance by striding with his enormous bulk, set heavily down, upon the ribs of one of the unlucky dogs who lay by the fire. The yell that followed was as full of danger as the uttered song had been, and quite discomfited the performer. His indignation at the misplaced position of the dog might have resulted in the wilful application of his feet to the offending animal, but that, just then, the hootings of an owl were faintly heard rising in the distance, and answered by another voice more near.

"It is Moore," said Lance Frampton. "It is from above. We shall have the colonel here directly."

"Let him come," was the response of Porgy; but he is too late for the music. That confounded dog!"

CHAPTER XV.

WOODCRAFT.

THE object of the signal was rightly conjectured. It brought Singleton. Successive hoots of the owl—who was one of the scouts of the party—indicated the several points of watch by which the route from “The Oaks” to the place of refuge had been guarded; and our partisan had no reason to complain, among his people, of any neglect of duty. He was received with the frank welcome of those who regarded him with equal deference and affection, as a friend and comrade no less than a superior. Lance Frampton seized his extended hand with the fondness of a younger brother; and even the corpulent Porgy, in his salutation of welcome, expressed the warmth of a feeling of which he was nowise lavish on common occasions. Supper had been reserved for their superior: and the venison steak, cast upon the coals as he approached, now strenuously seconded, by its rich odors, the invitation of his followers to eat. But Singleton declined.

“Were it possible, I should certainly fall to, my good fellow; for, of a truth, the smokes of that steak are much more grateful to my nostrils than the well-dressed dishes of the fashionable kitchen. My tastes have become so much accommodated to the *wild flavor* of the woods, in almost everything, that, out of the woods, I seem to have no great appetite for anything. I eat and drink as a matter of course, and with too little relish to remark on anything. Had I not already eaten supper, I should need no exhortation beyond that of the venison itself. Besides, I have no time. I must hurry back to the settlement as soon as possible.”

“You must certainly *taste* of the meat, colonel,” was the re-

sponse of Porgy, "if only because of the manner in which it was killed—with bow and arrow."

"Indeed! Who was the hunter?"

"Lance! You know I laughed when you spoke of bows and arrows for our men. I confess I thought it monstrous foolish to adopt such weapons. But I am beginning to respect the weapon. What put you in the notion of it, colonel?"

"We had neither shot nor powder, if you recollect. What was to be done? The Indians slew their meat, and fought fatal battles, with these weapons before the coming of the white people. The French and Spanish narrative describes them as fighting fiercely, and frequently cutting off the whites with no other weapons. Of the effect of the arrow in good hands, history gave us numerous and wonderful examples. The English, in the time of Henry the Seventh, slew with the cloth-yard shaft at *four* hundred yards."

"Impossible!"

"True, no doubt. In the time of Henry the Eighth, it was considered an efficient weapon at two hundred and fifty yards. Fighting with the French and Spaniards, the Indians could drive an arrow through a coat of escaupil—stuffed cotton—so as to penetrate fatally the breast which it covered; and some of their shafts were even found efficient when aimed against a coat-of-mail. With such evidence of the power of the weapon, its use never should have been abandoned. Certainly, where we had neither shot nor powder, nor muskets, it was the proper weapon for our hands. There would then have been no reason for one half of our people to wait in the woods, during an action, until their comrades should be shot down, before they could find the means of doing mischief by possessing themselves of the weapons of the fallen men. Bows and arrows, well handled, would have been no bad substitutes for muskets. In the hands of our people, accustomed to take sure aim, they would have been much more efficient than the musket in the hands of the raw, unpractised Englishman; while spears, made of poles, well sharpened and seasoned in the fire, would have been, like the pikes of the Swiss, quite equal to the bayonet at any time. These are weapons with which we might always

defend a country of such great natural advantages for war as ours."

"There's reason in it, surely."

"But the arguments in behalf of the bow and arrow are not exhausted. In the first place, you can never get out of ammunition. The woods everywhere abound in shafts; and, in a single night, a squad of sharpshooters may prepare weapons for a week's campaign and daily fighting. Wet and storm never damage your ammunition. A shaft once delivered is not lost. It may be recovered and shot a dozen times; and it is less burdensome, as a load, to carry a bow and sixty arrows than a gun with as many bullets. The arrow is sped silently to its mark. It makes no report. It flies unseen, like the pestilence by night. It tells not whence it comes. Its flash serves not as a guide to any answering weapon. Against cavalry it is singularly efficient. The wound from an arrow, which still sticks in the side of the horse, will absolutely madden him, and he will be totally unmanageable, rushing, in all probability, on his own columns, deranging their order, and sending dismay among the infantry. In regard to the repeated use of the same arrow, I may remind you of the fact that the French in Florida, under Laudonniere, were compelled, in some of their bloodiest fights with the red men, to stop fighting, at every possible chance, in order to gather up and break the arrows which had been delivered. I need not say what an advantage such a necessity would afford to an assailing party."

"I begin to respect the weapon," said Porgy; "I shall practise at it myself. I already feel like a Parthian."

"The greatest secret," continued Singleton, "in the use of the bow, seems to consist in drawing the arrow to its head. This was the secret of the English, and must have been of all very remarkable bowmen. To do this, the arrow must be drawn to the right ear. It is then delivered with its greatest force, and this requires equally sleight and strength. The feebler nations of the East, the Italians, and the gentle, timid races of the island of Cuba, and of Peru, seem to have drawn the weapon, as the ladies do, only to the breast. This mode of shooting diminishes the force one half. But you must practise constantly, boys, all

of you, when you have nothing more pressing on hands, so as to make sure of the butts at a hundred yards. That will answer for us. If this war is to last two years longer, as I suppose it will, we shall have no other ammunition to rely upon. We must take our bows from the savages, and our pikes from the Swiss."

There was some little more conversation, which, like that reported, forms no part of the absolute business of our narrative. But Singleton was not the person to waste much time. It was important, he thought, to raise the estimate of the bow and arrow among his followers, deeming it highly probable, not only that the weapon might be made very efficient even in modern warfare, but that it might be the only one left to them for future use. The partisans of Carolina, during the struggle for the recovery of the state, very seldom went into action with more than three rounds to the man.

"And now, Lance," said Singleton, "a few words with you."

He led him aside from the rest.

"Do you bring me any letters?"

"None, sir; the colonel had no time for writing, and no conveniences."

"Where did you leave him?"

"On the Edisto."

"West side?"

"Yes, sir."

"Had the negroes all come in?"

"All, sir, but one—a young fellow named Aaron, whom he thinks must have fallen into the hands of the enemy, or run off to them. He has sent them off for the Sautee, under the charge of Lieutenant Davis, with an escort of ten men."

"How does he recruit?"

"Well, sir, he got nineteen men along the Edisto, and fifteen brought their own rifles. His force is now forty-five, not counting *our* people, who will soon join us. He had a brush with a party of Tories, under Lem Waters; killed three, and took seven. He thinks of making a push for the Savannah, where there is one Major Fulton, with a party. He will then come back to the Edisto, and perhaps scout about the Ashley in hopes of

picking up a train of wagons. He is mightily in want of powder and ball, and begs that you will send him all you have to spare."

"He must look to the bow and arrow, I am afraid, at least for a season. Still, I am in hopes to do something for him, if my present scheme turns out well. But everything is doubtful yet. Did you get any tidings along the route?"

"Nothing much, sir. The country's moving everywhere; now on one side, now on the other; and I hear something everywhere of small parties, gathering up cattle and provisions."

The examination was still further pursued; but enough has been said to show the whereabouts and the performances of Colonel Walton, which were the chief objects of Singleton. The two soon rejoined the rest; and, after some general instructions and suggestions, Singleton led Lieutenant Porgy aside to communicate his more private wishes.

"At twelve to-morrow," said he, "I expect to be in the neighborhood of the Eight-Mile and Quarter-House. At one or other of these places, God willing, I hope to be at that hour. I wish you to cross the river with your party, and shelter yourself in the swamp-forest along the banks. Send your scouts on with instructions to keep watch upon both the Quarter and Eight-Mile House. A couple of chosen men, quick and keen-sighted, must be within hearing, but close, in the thicket of Izard's camp. Should they hear a triple blast of my horn, with a pause of one, and then another blast, let them make, with all speed, to the point from which I sound. Let them carry their rifles as well as broadswords, and see that their pieces are fit for service. But on no account let them disturb any persons along the route."

"Suppose a convoy for Dorchester, under a small guard?"

"Let it pass without disturbance, and let them not show themselves, on any pretext, or with any temptation in their sight, unless they hear my signal."

"We are grievously in want of everything. A single full powder-horn, and half a dozen or a dozen bullets, to each man, is all that we can muster. Salt is wanted, and——"

"I know all your wants, and hope shortly to supply them; but I have objects in view of still more importance, and they

must not be perilled even to supply our deficiencies. Let these instructions be closely followed, lieutenant, if you please. I shall probably find an opportunity of seeing and speaking with you, in the evening, on my return route to Dorchester."

"Do you venture there again?"

"There, or to 'The Oaks!'"

"Is there anything more, Colonel Singleton, in the way of instructions?"

"Nothing."

"Then let me have a word, colonel; and you will excuse me if I speak quite as much as a friend as a subordinate."

"My dear Porgy——"

"Ah, colonel——"

"Let me say, once for all, that I regard you as a comrade always, and this implies as indulgent a friendship as comports with duty."

"Do I not know it? I thank you! I thank you from the bottom of my heart!—and I have a heart, Singleton—by Apollo, I have a heart, though the rascally dimensions of my stomach may sometimes interfere with it. And now to the matter. I am concerned about you. I am."

"How?"

"As a soldier, and a brave one, of course you know that you are liable to be killed at any moment. A wilful bullet, a sweeping sword-stroke, or the angry push of a rusty bayonet, in bad hands, may disturb as readily the functions of the bowels in a colonel as in a lieutenant. For either of these mischances, the professional soldier is supposed, at all times, to be prepared; and I believe that we both go to our duties without giving much heed to the contingencies that belong to them."

"I am sure that *you* do, lieutenant."

Call me Porgy, colonel, if you please, while we speak of matters aside from business. If I am proud of anything, it is of the affections of those whom I esteem."

"Go on, Porgy."

'Now, my dear colonel, that you should die by bullet, broadsword, or bayonet, is nothing particularly objectionable, considering our vocation. It may be something of an inconvenience to

you, physically; but it is nothing that your friends should have reason to be ashamed of. But to die by the halter, Colonel Singleton—to wear a knotted handkerchief of hemp—to carry the knot beneath the left ear—throwing the head awkwardly on the opposite side, instead of covering with it the Adam's apple—to be made the fruit of the tree against the nature of the tree—to be hitched into cross-grained timbers, against the grain—to die the death of a dog, after living the life of a man—this, sir, would be a subject of great humiliation to all your friends, and must, I take it, be a subject of painful consideration to yourself.”

“Very decidedly, Porgy,” was the reply of the other, with a good-natured laugh.

“Why will you incur the dangers of such a fate? This is what your friends have a right to ask. Why put yourself, bound, as it were, hand and foot, in the keeping of these red-coated Philistines, who would truss you up at any moment to a swinging limb with as little remorse as the male alligator exhibits when he swallows a hecatomb of his own kidney. Why linger at Dorchester, or at ‘The Oaks,’ with this danger perpetually staring you in the face? There are few men at ‘The Oaks,’ and the place is badly guarded. The force at Dorchester itself is not so great but that, with Col. Walton’s squadron, we might attempt it. Say the word, and, in forty-eight hours, we can harry both houses; and if swinging must be done by somebody, for the benefit of ‘The Oaks’ hereafter, why, in God’s name, let it be a British or a Hessian carcass instead of one’s own. I might be persuaded, in the case of one of these bloody heathens, to think the spectacle a comely one. But in your case, colonel, as I am living man, it would take away my appetite for ever.”

“Nay, Porgy, you overrate the danger.”

“Do I! Not a bit. I tell you these people are getting desperate. Their cruelties are beginning only; and for this reason, that they find the state unconquered. So long as there is a single squad like ours between the Pedee and the Savannah, so long is there a hope for us and a hate for them. Hear to me, colonel, and beware! There is deadly peril in the risks which you daily take.”

“I know that there is risk, Porgy; but there are great gains depending upon these risks, and they must be undertaken by somebody. Our spies undertake such risks daily.”

“A spy is a spy, colonel, and nothing but a spy. He was born to a spy's life and a spy's destiny. He knows his nature and the end of his creation, and he goes to his end as to a matter of obligation. He includes the price of the halter, and the inconvenience of strangulation, in the amount which he charges for the duty to be done. But we who get no pay at all, and fight for the fun and the freedom of the thing only—there's no obligation upon us to assume the duty of another, at the risk of making a bad picture, and feeling uncomfortable in our last moments. No law of duty can exact of me that I shall not only die, but die of rope, making an unhandsome corse, with my head awfully twisted from the centre of gravity, where only it could lie at ease! My dear colonel, think of this! Say the word! and fight, scout, or only scrimmage, we'll share all risks with you, whether the word be 'Oaks' or 'Dorchester!' ”

“The peril will be soon over, Porgy. Three days will end it, in all probability; and, in that time, the same prudence which has kept me safe so long will probably prevail to secure me to the end. Have no fears—and do not forget that you can always strike in at the last moment. Your scouts see all that goes on, and, in a moment of danger, you know the signal.”

“Be it so! we're ready! Still I could wish it otherwise. But, by the way, talking of what we see, there's something that Bostwick has to tell you. He was stationed between 'The Oaks' and 'Dorchester' during the afternoon, and came in soon after dark. Here, Bostwick!”—and as the fellow came out of the front to the place where the two had been conversing, Porgy continued:—

“The colonel wants to hear of you what took place between the commandant of the post of Dorchester, Major Vaughan, and the chunky red faced fellow, whom you did not know ”

Bestwick told his story, which was briefly this. He had seen Vaughan ride toward “The Oaks,” and saw him returning to Dorchester just before dark. When within a mile of “The Oaks,” Vaughan drew up and dismounted, leading his horse

aside from the road and close to the thicket in which Bostwick lay concealed. Here he was soon joined by a "chunky red-faced fellow," as Porgy had described him, and a conversation of several minutes took place between the two, a portion of which only was intelligible to the scout. The names of Proctor and Furness, however, were several times mentioned by both parties; and Vaughan was evidently much interested in the subject. And length, the stranger, whom he called "John," gave him two letters, or folded papers, which Vaughan opened and read eagerly. Bostwick heard him say, distinctly—

"These, John, are very important. I now see whence he gets his knowledge. Find me more of these papers, John. He must have others. These do not tell all, yet he knows all! Find the rest, and be on the watch when he receives a new one."

"You will give them back to me," said John, "now that you have read them."

"Yes, when I have copied them. You shall have them to-morrow. You say that he showed these papers to Captain Furness?"

"Not sure, your honor; but he had them on the bedside when they talked together. I saw them through the keyhole."

"With that," continued Bostwick, "the major took a piece of gold money from his pocket and dropped it beside him where he stood. The other stooped and picked it up, and offered it to the major, who said, 'Keep it for your honesty, John.' They had something more to say, but I couldn't make it out, though I listened hard, thinking it might consarn you, colonel. After that, the major mounted and put off, and I tracked the other back to 'The Oaks.' He got in jist when you returned from riding with Major Proctor."

"Thank you, Bostwick—it does, in some measure, concern me. You are a good fellow, and though I have no gold pieces to drop for your benefit, yet you shall also be remembered for your honesty."

The business despatched which brought him to the encampment of his followers, the farewell of Singleton was no such formal leave-taking as distinguishes the military martinet. It was the affectionate farewell of comrades, who felt that they were parting with a friend rather than a superior.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW TO PLAY WITH KNAVES.

OUR partisan returned, without being discovered, to the mansion-house at "The Oaks," and reached his room in silence. He was soon asleep, for with a mind at ease, and habits of physical activity, sleep is never slow to bring us the needful succor. In the morning, he was up betimes, and soon made his way to the chamber of Proctor, who still slept—the unsatisfactory, uneasy sleep of anxiety and apprehension. Singleton had already thought of what he should do and say, in regard to the revelation which he felt that it was necessary to make to his new companion. There was some difficulty in accounting for the information he had acquired, touching the faithlessness of Proctor's servant, John; but our partisan had discussed the matter calmly in his own mind, and had come to the conclusion that Proctor should hear of the important fact, without being suffered to ask for an authority. This reservation, in the case of a man of character and good sense, like Singleton, was not a matter of difficulty.

The treacherous servant, knowing his master's habits of late rising, was absent. Singleton ascertained this fact before proceeding to Proctor's chamber. He thought it not improbable that John had gone to a meeting with Vaughan, with the view to the seasonable recovery of the letters; and, possibly to receive instructions for the future. It was important to avail himself of his absence, the better to effect his exposure. The British major was somewhat surprised to find Singleton in his chamber.

“Why, what’s the matter, Furness? I’m devilish glad to see you; but why so early?”

“I shall leave you directly after breakfast, and had something to say to you in private, which I regard as of moment to yourself, particularly at this juncture.”

“Ah! but whither do you go?”

“Below, to meet with General Williamson, at the Quarter House.”

“And what’s this business?”

“I have made a little discovery, Proctor, but can not now inform you in what manner I have made it, nor who are my authorities. On this point, you must ask me no questions, for I shall certainly answer none. In fact, a little secret of my own is involved in the matter, and this must make you content with what I shall be willing to disclose. But you will lose nothing. All that is important to you shall be told, and it must satisfy you when I assure you solemnly that it comes from the most unquestionable sources. You may safely believe it all.”

“Be it so! On your own conditions, then. I have the utmost faith in your assurance.”

“I thank you;—and, first, can you let me see again those two letters of your anonymous correspondent?”

“Certainly;” and Proctor leaped out of bed, threw on his *robe de chambre*, and proceeded to search his *escritoir*. The letters were not forthcoming. His trunks were next overhauled, his dressing-case, the pockets of his coat—they were nowhere to be found.

“I am satisfied,” said Singleton; “I feel sure that you look in vain.”

“I must have taken them with me, and left them below stairs.”

“No! They are in the hands of Vaughan, your enemy!”

“How! What mean you?” demanded the other.

Singleton then related what he had heard of the interview between Vaughan and the fellow John, as Bostwick reported it, suppressing, of course, all the clues to his source of information; but otherwise withholding nothing. Proctor was in a rage of indignation.

“Fool that I was! and I saw nothing; I suspected nothing; and this execrable scoundrel has been a spy upon my footsteps, Heaven knows how long! But I shall have the satisfaction, before I send him adrift, of reading him such a lesson with the horsewhip as shall be a perpetual endorsement to his back and character.”

“You will do no such thing, Proctor,” said Singleton, coolly, while going to the door and looking out upon the passage. It was clear, and he returned.

“Dress yourself at once, Proctor, and come with me to my chamber. It is more secure from eaves-droppers than this apartment. And first, let me entreat that you will bridle your anger; and, above all, suffer not this fellow to see or to suspect it. Let me exhort you to begin, from this moment, the labor of self-restraint. Your success in extricating yourself from the difficulty in which you stand, will be found in the adoption of that marble-like coldness of character which really confers so much strength upon your enemy. You must be cool, at least, and silent too. Come, hasten your dressing, for I have much to say, and shall have little time to say it in before breakfast.”

Proctor already deferred to the prompt, energetic, and clear-headed character of Singleton. He stared at him a moment, and then proceeded to obey him. His toilet was as quickly made as possible, and they were soon in Singleton's chamber. The latter then renewed the subject, and continued his counsels in the following fashion:—

“You have lived long enough, my dear Proctor, in our southern country, to know something of the rattlesnake. If you have ever had occasion to walk into our woods of a summer night, and to have suddenly heard the rattle sounded near you, you can very well conceive the terror which such a sound will inspire in the bosom of any man. It is a present and a pressing danger, but you know not from what quarter to expect the blow. The ringing seems to go on all around you. You fancy yourself in a very nest of snakes; and you are fixed, frozen, expecting your death every moment, yet dread to attempt your escape—dread to lift a foot lest you provoke the bite which is mortal. It is the very inability to face the enemy, to see where he lies

in ambush, that is the chief occasion of your terror. Could you see him—could you look on him where he lies—though coiled almost at your feet, head thrown back, jaws wide, fangs protruded, and eyes blazing, as it were, with a coppery lustre—you would have no apprehensions—he would, in fact, be harmless, and you could survey him at your leisure, and knock him quietly on the head as soon as you had satisfied your curiosity. Now, I regard it as particularly fortunate that you have discovered, in this instance, where your chief danger lies. You see your enemy. You know where he is. You know through what agency he works, and nothing is more easy than to keep your eye upon him, follow him in all his windings, and crush him with your heel at the most favorable moment. Your man John is the pilot to your rattlesnake. You are probably aware that the rattlesnake has his pilot, as the shark his, and the lion his?"

"Is it so?"

"Even so; and so far from showing yourself angry with this good fellow John, whose benevolence is such that he would serve two masters—so far from dismissing him with the horsewhip—your policy is not even to let him know what you have discovered. He will probably bring back these letters quietly, and you will find them, after your return from breakfast, in the proper place in your *escritoir*; and you will show yourself quite as unsuspecting as before."

"And keep the fellow still in my service?"

"To be sure, for the best of reasons! Through him you may be able to ascertain the game of his employer. By him you will probably trace out the windings of his master-snake. You will simply take care to put no important secrets in his way."

"But he has false keys, no doubt, to every trunk and *escritoir* that I have?"

"Most probably, and you will suffer him to *keep* them; only find some other hiding-place for your important matters to which you are secure that he carries no key, simply because of his ignorance of the hiding-place. Ordinary letters you will put away in the old places as before. Nay, as your enemy Vaughan seems to know this hand-writing—which you do not—you may amuse yourself by putting other choice specimens in his way.

imitate the hand occasionally—write yourself a few billets-doux now and then—and you may suggest little schemes for interviews between yourself and the unknown fair one, upon which your excellent fellow John will maintain a certain watch; and you can maintain your watch *on him*. It is now certain, from what Vaughan has said, that the handwriting is known to him, and that it is a woman's!"

"But the wearisome toil of such a watch—the annoying feeling that you have such a rascal about you."

"Very annoying, doubtless, and troublesome; but it is one of those necessities which occur in almost every life—where a man has to endure much, and struggle much, and exert all his manhood to secure safety or redress, or vengeance."

"Ha! that is the word! vengeance! and I will have it!"

"It is an advantage to keep John, that you do know him. Dismiss him, and you warn Vaughan and himself that he is suspected—possibly discovered. This makes your enemy cautious. He still may employ John to your dis-service, though you employ him not. Should you get another servant are you better sure of his fidelity? Is it not just as likely that he will be bought and bribed also? Will you doubt him?—can you confide in him? Neither, exactly—both, certainly to some extent! Why not confide in John to the same extent? In other words, confide in neither. Seem not to suspect him, but leave nothing at his mercy. This is simply a proper, manly vigilance where you are surrounded by enemies, and where their stratagems and your incaution have already given them an advantage in the campaign."

"Ah! Furness, had I your assistance?"

"You do not need it. Exert your own faculties and subdue your passion until you are certain of your prey. If you be not cool, patient, watchful, you are lost in the struggle. Are you a man? Here is one of the most admirable of all opportunities to assert and prove your manhood. Any blockhead, with the ordinary gentlemanly endowment of courage, can fight through the enemy's ranks, or perish with honor. But it is the noblest manhood, that in which courage is twinned with thought, to fight only at your pleasure, and make your intellect the shield in the

struggle. Do not fear that I shall desert you, Proctor, when you need a friend."

"I thank you. You are right. I feel that I can do what you counsel, and I *will* do it. . Let me have your further counsels.

We need not pursue those suggestions of Singleton, by which he advised the details in general terms, of that policy with which he sought to impress his companion. Proctor was by no means a feeble man—in fact, he was rather a strong one, capable of thought and possessed of latent energies which needed nothing but the spur of a will which had not yet been forced into sufficient activity. The superior will of Singleton finally stimulated his own. He acknowledged its superiority and tacitly deferred to it. The other was copious in his suggestions, and they were those of a vigilant mind, sharpened by practice, and naturally well endowed with foresight and circumspection. He took a comprehensive view of all the difficulties in the way of the British officer, and succeeded in pointing out to him where, and in what manner, he would most probably find the clews which would successfully lead him out from among his enemies. We need only give his closing counsels, as they somewhat concern us at present.

"Do not think of leaving 'The Oaks' just now, Proctor. Remain here, keeping the excellent John with you until your uncle departs. Busy yourself as his secretary. He needs your services. The young man he has with him can give him little help, and he knows it. He is disposed to conciliate you, and I would not show myself hostile or suspicious. It may serve you somewhat, as well as Cruden, to remain here as long as you can. Your policy is to gain time, and to be as near your enemy as possible, affording him all his present opportunities, as long as this can be done with propriety. For this, you have a reasonable excuse, so long as Cruden remains. While here, you may also serve this young lady, the daughter of Walton, in whom you appear to have an interest. Her affairs may well need the assistance of such a friend as yourself."

The call to breakfast brought John to the presence of his master. Proctor played his part successfully, and the fellow

had no suspicions, though somewhat surprised to find the former up and dressed, and in the chamber of the loyalist, Furness. We may add that, when Proctor looked into his *escritoir*, an hour after Singleton's departure, he found the missing letters in the place where he kept them usually. Our partisan left "The Oaks" soon after breakfast, his farewells being exchanged with Cruden and his nephew at the table. A silent but emphatic squeeze of the hand, on the part of Proctor, spoke more impressively than words the warmth of that young man's feelings.

CHAPTER XVII.

SURPRISE.

RIDING slowly, and looking about him with a curious interest as he rode, Singleton did not reach his place of destination till nearly one o'clock. He was not unconscious, as he proceeded, of occasional intimations in the forest that his friends were already at the designated points of watch. At intervals, the hootings of the owl, or a sharp whistle, familiar to Marion's men, apprized him where to look for them in the moment of emergency. He himself was not without his weapons, though the small-sword at his side alone was visible. An excellent pair of pistols was concealed within the ample folds of his hunting-shirt, and a beautifully polished horn was slung about his neck. With a fleet and powerful steed of the best Virginia blood, well-trained, and accustomed to obey cheerfully the simplest word of his rider, Singleton felt as perfectly confident of his own security as it is possible for one to feel under any circumstances. He rode forward with coolness, accordingly, to the place of meeting, with a person, for whom, at that period, the patriots of South Carolina felt nothing but loathing and contempt.

General Williamson, the person thus regarded, was a Scotchman, who had probably entered the colonies some twelve or fifteen years before, and had acquired considerable social and political influence in the upper country—the region which he occupied being originally settled in great part by Europeans direct from the Old World, or immediately from Pennsylvania and New York. In the first dawning of the Revolutionary struggle, Williamson took sides with the *movement*, or patriotic party. It is probable that he was influenced in this direction,

rather in consequence of certain local rivalries in the interior, and because of the judicious persuasions, or flatteries, of the leading men of the lower country—Drayton, Laurens, and others—than because of any real activity of his sympathies with the cause of colonial independence. He was an illiterate, but shrewd person; and, as a colonel first, and finally a general of militia, he behaved well, and operated successfully in sundry conflicts with the Indians of the frontier and the loyalists of his own precincts. The fall of Charleston, which temporarily prostrated the strength of the state, threw him into the arms of the enemy. He took what is commonly known as a “British protection,” by which he professed to observe a neutrality during the progress of the war. In the condition of affairs—the utter overthrow of the army of the south, the belief that its resources were exhausted, and the growing opinion that Congress would be compelled, through similar exhaustion of resource, to yield to the British, at least the two colonies of Georgia and South Carolina, both of which were covered by the invading army—this measure, on the part of Williamson, was perhaps not so censurable. The same act had been performed by many others in conspicuous positions; who could offer no such apology as Williamson. He was a foreigner; originally a subject of the British crown; sprung from a people remarkable always for their loyalty, and whose affinities were naturally due to the cause of Britain. But Williamson’s error was not limited to the taking of “protection.” He took up his abode within the walls of Charleston, and it became the policy of the British to employ his influence against the cause for which he had so recently been in arms. In this new relation, it is doubtful if he exercised much influence with the borderers whom he deserted. It was enough that such were understood to be his new objects, by which he had secured, in especial degree, the favor of the British commandant at Charleston. The affair of Arnold, in the north, furnished a name to Williamson in the south; and when spoken of subsequently to the detection of Arnold’s treason, he was distinguished as the “Arnold of Carolina.” This summary will sufficiently serve as introductory to what follows. It was to confer with this person, thus odiously distinguished, that we

find Colonel Singleton, of Marion's brigade, in the assumed character and costume of Captain Furness, of the loyalist rifles, on his way to the public hotel, some eight miles from Charleston.

Williamson had been, somewhat impatiently, awaiting his arrival in one of the chambers of the hotel, whence he looked forth upon the surrounding woods with the air of a man to whom all about him was utterly distasteful. A British dragoon sat upon a fallen tree, some thirty yards from the dwelling, his horse being fastened to a swinging limb, and ready saddled and bitted, awaiting in the shade.

There was something in what he saw to darken the brows of the general, who, wheeling away from the window, threw himself upon a seat in the apartment, and, though there was no fire on the hearth, drawing near to it and thrusting his heels against the mantel. He was a stout, well-built personage, on the wintry side of forty, perhaps, with large but wrinkled forehead, and features rather prominent than impressive. His head was thrown back, his eyes resting cloudily upon the ceiling, and his position at such an angle as simply preserved his equilibrium. His meditations were not of an agreeable character. His darkened brows, and occasional fragments of soliloquy, showed them to be gloomy and vexatious. He had many causes for discontent, if not apprehension. He had sacrificed good name, position, and property, and had found nothing compensative in the surrender. His former comrades were still in the field, still fighting, still apparently resolute in the cause which he had abandoned; the British strength was not increasing, their foothold less sure than before, and their treatment of himself, though civil and respectful, was anything but cordial—was wholly wanting in warmth; and there was no appearance of a disposition to confer upon him any such command as had been given to Arnold. Whether an appointment equal to that which he had enjoyed in the state establishment, would have reconciled him to his present relations, it is difficult to determine. No such proffer had been made him, nor have we any evidence that he was anxious for such an appointment. He was not a man of enterprise; but he could not deceive himself as to the fact that the British authorities had shown themselves disappointed in the

amount of strength which his acquisition had brought to their cause. His desertion of the whigs had been followed by no such numbers of his former associates as, perhaps, his own assurances had led his present allies to expect. His labors were now chiefly reduced to a maintenance of a small correspondence with persons of the interior, whom he still hoped to influence, and to such a conciliation of the humors of Balfour—whose weaknesses the shrewd Scotchman had soon discovered—as would continue him in the moderate degree of favor which he enjoyed. This statement will serve to indicate the nature of that surly and dissatisfied mood under which we find him laboring.

He was thus found by Singleton—as Captain Furness, of the loyalists—whose presence was announced by a little negro, habited only in a coarse cotton shirt reaching to his heels. Of the slight regard which Williamson was disposed to pay to his visiter, or to his objects, or to those of his British employers, we may form a reasonable idea from the fact that he never changed his position in the seat which he occupied; but still, even on the entrance of the supposed loyalist, maintained his heels against the mantel, with the chair in which he sat properly balanced upon its hind legs. His head was simply turned upon his shoulders enough to suffer his eyes to take in the form of his visiter.

Singleton saw through the character of the man at a glance. He smiled slightly as their eyes encountered, and drew a rather favorable inference from the treatment thus bestowed upon a seeming loyalist. The auspice looked favorable to the interests of the patriotic party. He approached, but did not seek, by any unnecessary familiarity, to break down those barriers upon which the dignity of his superior seemed disposed to insist. At once putting on the simple forester, Singleton addressed him—

“You’re the general—General Williamson—I reckon?”

“You are right, sir. I am General Williamson. You, I suppose, are Captain Furness, of the loyalist rifles?”

“The same, general, and your humble servant.”

“Take a seat, captain,” was the response of Williamson, never once changing his position.

"Thank you, sir, and I will," said the other, coolly, drawing his chair within convenient speaking distance.

"You brought letters to me, Captain Furness, from Colonels Fletchall, Pearis, and Major Stoveall. You are in want of arms, I see. On this subject, I am authorized, by Colonel Balfour, to tell you that a train of wagons will set forth to-morrow from the city. One of these wagons is specially designed for your command, containing all your requisitions. It is that which is numbered eleven. The train will be under a small escort, commanded by Lieutenant Meadows, whom you are requested to assist in his progress. The route will be by Nelson's Ferry to Camden; and when you have reached Camden, your wagon will be detached and surrendered to your own keeping. You will order your command to rendezvous at that point. But here is a letter of instructions from Colonel Balfour, which contains more particular directions."

Singleton took the letter, which he read deliberately, and put away carefully in his bosom. A pause ensued. Williamson lowered his legs, finally, and said—

"There is nothing further, Captain Furness. You have all that you require."

"There were some letters, general, that I brought for you," was the suggestion of Singleton.

There was a marked hesitancy and dissatisfaction in the reply of his companion.

"Yes, sir: my friends seem to think that I ought to write despatches by you to certain persons, over whom I am supposed to exercise some influence. I do not know that such is the case; and, even if it were, I am not satisfied that I shall be doing a friendly act to the persons referred to by encouraging them, at this stage of the war, to engage in new and perilous enterprises, and form new relations directly opposite to those in which they are acting now."

"But, general, the cause of his majesty is getting quite desperate among us. We sha'n't be able to hold our ground at all, unless we can get out on our side such men as Waters, Caldwell, Roebuck, Thomas, Miller, and a few others."

"That is the very reason, Captain Furness, that I am unwill-

ling to advise men, whom I so much esteem, to engage in an enterprise which may ruin them for ever."

"How, general? I don't see—I don't understand."

"Very likely, Captain Furness," said the other, quite impatiently. "You see, sir, though as much prepared as ever to promote the success of his majesty's arms and to peril myself, I do not see that it would be altogether proper for me, dealing with friends, to give them such counsel as would involve them in useless dangers, or encourage them in enterprises, the fruits of which may not be profitable to the cause I espouse, and fatal to themselves. In the first place, I doubt greatly if my recommendation would have any effect upon the persons you mention. It is true, they were my friends and followers when I served the whig cause; but I see no reason to think that, in changing sides, I continued to keep their respect and sympathy. In the next place, I am not satisfied that the officers of the crown, or the British government itself, are taking the proper course for pushing their conquests or securing the ground that they have won. They hold forth no encouragement to the people of the soil. They do not treat well the native champions who rise up for their cause. The provincials are not properly esteemed. They never get promotion; they are never intrusted with commands of dignity, or with any power by which they could make themselves felt. The war languishes. No troops, or very few, now arrive from Great Britain; and these, chiefly Irish, are better disposed to fight *for* the rebels than fight against them. In fact, sir, I see nothing to encourage our friends in risking themselves, at this late day, in the struggle. Those who are already committed, who have periled fame and fortune on the cause, who can not return to the ranks they have abandoned, they must take their chances, I suppose; but even these see no proper motive which should urge them to persuade persons whom they esteem into the field. I have already done all that I could. When I first left the ranks of the whigs, I wrote to these very persons, giving them the reasons which governed me in my conduct, and urging these reasons upon them as worthy of the first consideration. To these letters I have received no answer. What should prompt me to write

them again? Of what possible avail these arguments, repeated now when their prospects are really improving and their strength is greater? A proper pride, Captain Furness, revolts at the humiliation of such a performance."

"I could have wished, General Williamson," replied Singleton, his tone and manner changing, "that you could have found a better reason than your pride for your refusal to do what is required."

"Why, who are you, sir?" demanded Williamson, drawing back his chair, and confronting the speaker for the first time.

A smile of Singleton alone answered this question, while he proceeded—

"I am better pleased, sir, to believe in another reason than that you have given for this forbearance. The decline of English power in the back country, and its weakness and bad management below, are certainly sufficient reasons to keep the patriots steadfast in *their* faith. But, sir, permit me to ask if you have suffered Colonel Balfour to suspect that you are likely to use this language to me, or to refuse these letters?"

An air of alarm instantly overspread the countenance of Williamson.

Again I ask, who are you?" was his reply to this question.

"I am not exactly what I seem, General Williamson; but my purpose here is not to inspire you with any apprehension."

"Are you not the son of my venerable friend, Ephraim Furness, of Ninety-Six?"

"I am not, sir; I will mystify you no longer. For certain purposes, I have borrowed the character of Captain Furness, who is in my hands a prisoner. I am, sir, Colonel Singleton, of Marion's brigade."

Williamson sprang in horror to his feet.

"Ha! sir! of Marion's brigade! What is your purpose with me?—what do you design? Do you know, sir, that you are in my power? that I have only to summon yonder dragoon, and your life, as a spy and a traitor, is in my hands?"

"Coolly, General Williamson; do not deceive yourself. It is *you* who are in *my* hands, your dragoon to the contrary not

withstanding! A single word from you, sir, above your breath and I blow out your brains without a scruple."

He drew forth his pistols as he spoke. Williamson, meanwhile, was about to cross the room to possess himself of his smallsword that lay upon the table. Singleton threw himself in the way, as he proceeded thus:—

"I have not come here unadvisedly, General Williamson, or without taking all necessary precautions, not only for *my* safety, but for *yours*. I have only to sound this bugle, and the house is surrounded by the best men of Marion. You know *their* quality, and you have heard of *me*! I came here, expecting to find you in the very mood in which you show yourself—discontented—humbled to the dust by your own thoughts—conscious and repenting of error—dissatisfied with the British—dissatisfied with your new alliance, and anxious to escape all further connection with it, as equally satisfied that it is fatal to your future hopes and dishonorable to your name. But I came also prepared, if disappointed in these calculations, to make you my prisoner, and subject you, as a traitor to the American cause, to a summary trial, and a felon's death."

A blank consternation overspread the visage of Williamson. He was under the eye of a master—an eye that looked into his own with all the eager watch of the hawk or the eagle, and with all the stern confidence in his own strength which fills the soul of the tiger or the lion. The big sweat stood out in great drops upon the brow of the victim; he attempted to speak, but his voice failed him; and still he wavered, with an inclining to the window, as if he still thought of summoning the dragoon to his assistance. But the native vigor of his intellect, and his **manhood**, soon came to his relief. He folded his arms across his breast, and his form once more became steady and erect.

"You have your pistols, Colonel Singleton! Use them—you *shall* use them—you shall have my life, if that is what you desire; but I will never yield myself alive to the power of your people."

"You must not be suffered to mistake me, General Williamson. If I have been compelled to utter myself in the words of threatening, it was an alternative, which you have the power to

avoid. We do not wish your death. We wish your services. We know, as well as yourself, that the power of the British is declining—that the days of their authority are numbered. We know the apology which can be made for your desertion of the American cause——”

“As God is my judge, Colonel Singleton, I never deserted it until it had deserted me! My officers recommended the protection—our troops were scattered—we had no army left. Beaufort was cut to pieces—our cavalry dispersed—Congress would, or could, do nothing for us—and, in despair of any success or safety, not knowing where to turn, I signed the accursed instrument which was artfully put before us at this juncture, and which offered us a position of neutrality, when it was no longer possible to offer defence.”

“You could have fled, general, as hundreds of us did, to North Carolina and Virginia, to be in readiness for better times.”

“So I might, sir; but so also might your kinsman, Colonel Walton.”

Singleton was silenced for a moment by the retort; but he used it for the purposes of reply.

“Colonel Walton is now atoning, sword in hand, for his temporary weakness and error. He was too much governed, General Williamson, by considerations such as, no doubt, weighed upon you. He had great wealth, and a favorite daughter.”

“Ah! there it is! That, sir, is the melancholy truth. Family and lands were the thoughts that made me feeble, as it made others.”

There was an appearance of real mental agony in the speaker, in the utterance of these words, which moved the commiseration of Singleton. He proceeded more tenderly:—

“Undoubtedly, you had your apology, General Williamson, for much of this error; but not *for all*! Still, atonement *for all* is within your power; and I have not come hither unadvised of your situation, or of the capacity which you still possess to do service to the country. It is clear that, soon or late, the British must be expelled from the state. Unless you make terms with its future masters, your good name, which you would entail to your children, and your vast landed estates, are equal

ly the forfeit. I *know* that these reflections are pressing upon you. I *know* that you yourself, or one whom I assume to be you—you alone can determine if I am right—have already initiated the steps for your return to the bosom of your old friendships and associations. Sir, I was in the tent of General Greene when Mrs. William Thompson and her daughter reached his presence from the city.”

“Ah!”

“I saw a certain paper taken from the bosom of the unconscious child by the mother. It had been put into her bosom by an officer in Charleston, as she was about to leave the city—”

“Enough, sir, enough! And General Greene?”

“Look at this paper, General Williamson.”

Unscrewing the hilt of his sword, Singleton drew forth a small, neatly-folded billet, without signature or address, which contained certain brief propositions.

“Read this paper, general. There is nothing explicit in it, nothing to involve any party. But it comes from General Marion, with the approbation of General Greene; it is designed for *you!* and you are entreated to recognise *me* as fully authorized to explain their views and to receive and report your own. You will be pleased to learn from me that your situation, your feelings, and your desires, are perfectly understood; and that they pledge themselves to use all their influence and power in procuring your honorable restoration to the confidence of the country, upon your taking certain steps, which I am prepared to explain, for putting yourself right once more in relation to the cause for which we are contending. It is with you to decide.”

“Declare your objects, your wishes, Colonel Singleton. Say the word, and I throw myself at once among the squadrons of Greene, and offer my sword once more, in any capacity, in the service of my country.”

This was said eagerly, and with quite as much earnestness of manner and feeling as was called forth by the terms of the declaration.

“I am afraid, General Williamson, that you could do us but little service by such a proceeding. You would only endanger

yourself without serving our cause. To deal with you candidly, you have a penance to perform. You must approve yourself a friend by absolute and valuable services before you can be recognised as such. There is no injustice in this. You will remember your own answer, on your Cherokee expedition, in 1776, when Robert Cunningham came into your camp and offered his services. You objected that, however, willing yourself to confide in his assurances, the prejudices of your people could not be overcome with regard to him. His case then, is yours now. To show yourself among our troops would be to peril your life only. I could not answer for it."

"In the name of God, then, what am I to do? How can I serve you!"

"Where you are—in the camp—in the city of the enemy," answered Singleton, impressively resting his hand upon the wrist of his companion, "you may do us a service of the last importance, the results of which will be eminently great—the merits of which will wholly acquit you of all past weaknesses. Hear me, sir. We *know* that we have friends in Charleston, who are impatient of the miserable, the brutal, and degrading yoke of Neshitt Balfour! We *know* that many are desperately inclined to rise in arms, and to seek, at all hazards, to rescue the city from the enemy. It needs but little help or encouragement from without; and *that* help General Greene is not disposed to withhold, whenever he can be satisfied of a reasonable prospect of success. The British garrison in Charleston is known to be weak and dispirited. Their cavalry is small. They have no enterprise. Supplies from Britain do not often arrive in season, and the commandant has already more than once meditated recruiting bodies of the blacks as troops for supplying their deficiencies, and meeting the emergencies which increase daily. Let them once be compelled to put that design into execution, and they not only stimulate all the patriots into renewed activity—arm many who have been hitherto inert—but drive from their ranks every loyalist who is a slaveholder. This is their peril—this shows their feebleness. Of this feebleness we propose to take advantage on the first specious showing of good fortune. For this purpose we desire, within the city, a friend who

will promptly and truthfully convey intelligence—will ascertain our friends—inform us in regard to our resources—show where the defences are weakest, and keep us well advised of the plans, the strength, and the movements of the enemy. It is for you to determine whether you will act in this capacity—one nowise inconsistent with your present feelings and former principles, and one, I may add, by no means inconsistent with a sound policy, which must see that the days of British rule are numbered on this continent.”

What need to pursue, through its details, the protracted conference between the parties? Let it suffice that the terms vouchsafed by Greene, through Singleton, were acceded to by Williamson. In some degree, he had been already prepared for this retransfer of his allegiance to his former faith. We must do him the justice, however, to add that he would greatly have preferred to have done his part, as heretofore, in the field of battle. But this was clearly impossible; and his own shrewd sense soon persuaded him of the truth and force of Singleton's reasoning. They separated with an understanding that they were to meet again at designated periods, and a cipher was agreed upon between them. It was quite dark when Singleton, after a smart canter, found himself once more at “The Oaks.” We forego the details of a brief interview with his scouting party, on the route, as not necessary to our progress, and designed only to instruct his followers in respect to theirs.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE REVEL.

IN the brief and hurried meeting which had taken place between Singleton and his men, on his return from the interview with Williamson, he had given them such instructions as caused their general movement. Their camps, on both sides of the Ashley, were broken up that very night; and, lighted by a friendly moon—having so arranged as to give a wide berth to “The Oaks,” as well as Dorchester—they were scouring away by midnight, through well-known forest-paths, in the direction of “The Cypress,” at the head of the Ashley, where lay another party of the band.

There was famous frolicking that night in the secure recesses of the swamp. Here they might laugh and sport without apprehension. Here they might send up the wild song of the hunter or the warrior, nor dread that the echoes would reach unfriendly ears. Well might our fearless partisans give loose to their livelier impulses, and recompense themselves for the restraints of the past in a cheerful hilarity and play. There was a day of respite accorded to their toils, and their fires were gayly lighted, and their venison steaks smoked and steamed upon the burning coals, and their horns were converted into drinking cups; and the dance enlivened their revels, under the great oaks and cypresses, towering over the islet hammocks of the deep morass.

“Shall all be toil and strife, and care and anxiety, my comrades?” was the cry of Porgy, as they surrounded the fire when supper was concluded and listened to the oracular givings-forth of that native epicurean. “We, who ride by midnight and fight by day, who scout and scour the woods at all hours and

seasons, for whom there is no pay and as little promotion, shall we not laugh and dance, and shout and sing, when occasion offers, and leave the devil, as in duty bound, to pay the piper? Hear our arrangements for the night. Give ear, boys, and hearken to the duties assigned you. Half a dozen of you must take the dogs and gather up a few coons and 'possums. We must take care of the morrow, in spite of the apostle. Who volunteers for the coon hunt?"

"If the lieutenant will go himself, I'm one to volunteer," said Ben Mosely.

"Out upon thee, you young varmint! Do you mean me? With such a person as mine—a figure made for state occasions and great ceremonials only? Do you mean *me*?"

"To be sure I do," was the reply.

"Why, this is flat treason! It's a design against my life, as well as my dignity. I hunt coons! I splash and plunge among these hammocks, bestraddle fallen cypresses, rope myself with vines, burrow in bogs, and bruise nose and shin against snags and branches! Come closer, my son, that I may knock thee upon the head with this lightwood knot."

"Thank you for nothing, lieutenant—I'm well enough at this distance," said Ben, coolly.

"No—no, my children; the employment should always suit the party. You are young and slight. You will pass through avenues where I should stick, and leap bayous through which I should have to flounder: my better plan is presiding at your feasts, and giving dignity to your frolics. Call up your dogs, Ben—you, Stokes, Higgins, Joe, Miller, Charley, Droze, and Ike Waring—and put out without more delay. I know that you can get us more coons than any others of the squad; and I know that you like the sport. Be about it. We shall console ourselves during your absence, as well as we can, with dance and song, with a few games of old sledge, and with an occasional draught from the jug of Jamaica, in honor of your achievements."

Some playful remonstrances from the party thus chosen were urged against the arrangement, and no doubt one or more of them would have preferred infinitely to remain behind; but

they were all young, and the supper and the rest of an hour, which they had enjoyed, had put them in the humor which makes men readily submissive to a superior, particularly when the labor takes something of the aspect of a frolic.

"But you will let us have a sup of the Jamaica, Uncle Porgy, before we set out?"

"Yes, yes. You are good children; and perhaps your only deficiency is in the matter of spirit. You shall embrace the jug."

"A sup all round," was the cry from some one in the back ground.

"What impudent fellow is that, yelping out from the darkness made by his own face? Let him come forward and get his deserts."

"If that's what you mean, uncle," said the speaker, coming forward, "I shall have the jug to myself."

"What! you, Pritchard!—the handle only, you dog! Why should you have a right to any?"

"The best right in the world. And now let me ask, Lieutenant Porgy, where this old Jamaica, for it *is* old Jamaica, came from?"

"Truly, I should like to have that question answered myself. It *is* old Jamaica, I avouch—very old Jamaica. We had not a drop when we went down to 'The Oaks,' and the gallon jug that Singleton sent out to us was soon emptied, dose it out as cautiously as we could. Where, then, did this come from?"

"It's a devil's gift, I reckon," said another, "since no one can tell anything about it."

"A devil's gift!—as if the devil gave good things at any time! But if a devil's gift, my children, for which of our many virtues has he bestowed this upon us?"

"And I say," cried Pritchard, "that it is an angel's gift, if I know anything about it. And I ought to know, since it was I who brought it here."

"Excellent young man!" cried Porgy.

"Say, excellent young woman, too," was the response of Pritchard, "since, I reckon, you owe that jug to Miss Walton."

"The deuce we do! And here have I been loitering and hanging over the jug, and arguing about its origin and all that

sort of nonsense, without knowing by instinct whose health was to be first honored. Give me the cup here, one of you. Let me unseal. Kate Walton, boys, is a noble creature, whom we must treat with becoming reverence. I knew her when she was a child, and even then she was a calm, prim, thoughtful, but fond and generous little creature. God bless her! Boys, here's man's blessing upon woman's love!"

"Three times three!" was the cry, as the cup went round.

"We are mere blackguards now, boys. Nobody that sees us in these rags, begrimed with smoke, could ever suppose that we had been gentlemen; but, losing place and property, boys, we need not, and we do not, lose the sense of what we have known, or the sentiment which still makes us honor the beautiful and the good."

"Hem! After supper, lieutenant, I perceive that you are always sentimental," was the remark of Pritchard.

"And properly so. The beast is then pacified. There is then no conflict between the animal and the god. Thought is then supreme, and summons all the nobler agencies to her communion. But have ye drunk, ye hunters? Then put out. You have scarce two hours to daylight; and if you hope to take coon or 'possum, you must be stirring. Call up your dogs."

"Hee-up! Hee-up! Snap!—Teazer!—Bull!"

The dogs were instantly stirring, shaking themselves free from sleep, their eyes turned up to the hunters, and their long noses thrust out, while they stretched themselves at the summons of the horn.

"Here, dogs! Hee-up! hee-up! hee-up! Away, boys! Hee-up! hee-up, Snap! Teazer, there! Bull!"

And, with the cheering signals, the hunters gathered up their torches, some taking an axe, and others a bundle of lightwood (resinous pine), beneath the arm. Waving their lights across the darkness, they were soon away, the glimmer of the torches showing more and more faintly at every moment through the thick woods of the swamp. The dogs well knew the duties required of them, and they trotted off in silence, slow coursing with their noses to the earth.

This interruption lasted but a moment; and while some of

the party remaining in the camp were stretched about the fire, drowsing or talking, others drew forth from sauted wallets their well-thumbed packs of cards. A crazy violin began to moan in spasms from the end of a fallen tree on the edge of the hammock, against the decaying but erect branches of which the musician leaned, while his legs crossed the trunk; and other preparations were made for still other modes of passing the rest of the night, but few being disposed to give any heed to sleep. For that matter, there was little need of sleep to the greater number. They had slept, the scouts excepted, through the greater part of the day preceding, while in the woods near "The Oaks," and while waiting on the movements of Singleton during his conference with Williamson near Izard's camp. They were mostly bright, therefore, for the contemplated revels, of whatever sort. A wild dance, rather more Indian than civilized, exercised the fiddle of the younger man of the group, which ended finally in a glorious struggle to draw each other into the fire, around which they circled in the most bewildering mazes.—Such figures Taglioni never dreamed of.—Little heeding these rioters, Porgy had his circle busy in a rubber of whist; while yet another group was deeply buried in the mysteries of "seven-up," "old sledge," or, to speak more to the *card*, "all-fours."—We need not follow the progress of the gamesters, who, in the army, are usually inveterate. Enough that much *Continental* money, at its most exaggerated value, changed hands in the course of an hour's play; fortune having proved adverse to the philosopher, Porgy, leaving him minus fifteen hundred dollars—a sum which, according to the then state of the currency, would not have sufficed to buy for the winner a stout pair of negro shoes.

"Curse and quit!" cried the corpulent lieutenant. "There's no luck for a fat man after supper. And now tell us. Pritchard, how you got possession of that jug of Jamaica. We will try its flavor again while you tell your story. One better appreciates the taste of his liquor a full hour after supper, than just when he has finished eating—the palate then has no prejudices."

The party replenished their horns, after the Scandinavian fashion, and Pritchard replied—

"You must know that when the colonel and Miss Walton came out to meet her father that night when we gave Balfour's regulars such a scare and tramp, they went forward beyond the rice-stacks, leaving me, Tom Leonard, and somebody else—Bill Mitchell, I think it was, though I can't say"—

"No matter who—go ahead."

"Well, three of us were left in the little wood of scrubby oaks between the stacks and the dwelling, as a sort of watch. Who should come along, a little after the colonel and the lady had passed, but Cesar, the negro! Him we captured, and he made terms with us immediately, giving up his prog; and his hands were full—this jug of Jamaica, a small cheese, and a bag of smoked tongue."

"Smoked tongue and cheese! And you mean to say, Sergeant Pritchard, that you have suffered these most important medicines to be lost? Smoked tongues and cheese! What have you done with them? I have seen none of them."

"I knew better than that, lieutenant. We hadn't well got possession of the negro and the provisions, before the cursed bugle sounded. The negro dodged; Tom Leonard took the back track to give the alarm; and where Bill Mitchell went—if 'twas he—there's no telling; but the jug, the bag, and the cheese lay at my feet. Was I to lose them—to leave them?"

"It would have been cowardice—nay, treason—had you done so, Sergeant Pritchard."

"I knew *that*, lieutenant; and, gathering up the good things, I pushed out for the great bay lying west of the mansion, and had just time to hide myself and the jug"—

"The tongue and cheese? The tongue, the"—

"Oh, I hid them, too; and there they lay safely, in the hollow of a cypress, while I made my way, after the red coats had passed, back to the camp. We took the circuit by the bay, when we pushed for the cypress, and I then picked them up and brought them off. I have them all here in safety."

"It is well that you have! Yet did you trifle terribly with the safety of these valuable stores. Two days and nights hidden in a cypress hole, and not a word said about them!"

"I knew that we had plenty of venison,"

"But they might have been found by the enemy, Sergeant Pritchard. They might have gladdened the hearts of the Philistines!"

"I hid them too well for that."

"They might have been eaten up by the wood-rats!"

"I thrust them up the hollow, and put a crotch-stick up to sustain them."

"It is well that you took these precautions. Had they been lost, Pritchard, I would have brought you to the halberds. Good things, so necessary to our commissariat and medicine-chest, are not to be periled idly; and when they are the gift of beauty, the trust becomes more sacred still. You may thank your stars, Pritchard, that the flavor of this Jamaica is so excellent"—smacking his lips after the draught—"I feel that I must forgive you."

"I should like a little sugar with mine," said one of the young fellows stretching out his horn.

"Sugar!" exclaimed Porgy. "What sacrilege! Young man, where did you receive your education? Would you spoil a cordial of such purity as this with any wretched saccharine infusion? Sugar, sir, for *bad* rum, not for good! Take it as it is; drink it, however unworthy of it, but do not defile it. For such an offence against proper taste as this, were justice done, a fellow should have a baker's dozen on his bare back."

The youth was glad to receive the potion assigned him, and to swallow it, at a gulp, unsweetened.

"And now, boys"—they had now ceased dancing and playing, and had gathered around our epicurean—"and now, boys, it lacks a good hour to the morning," said Porgy, taking out a huge silver watch, almost as large and round as a Dutch turnip, and holding it up to the fire light. "There are no eyes present quite ripe for sleep. I am for a story or a song. Where's our poet?—where's Dennison? He has not had a sup of the creature. He must drink, and give us something. I know that, for the last three days, he has been hammering at his verses. Where is he? Bring him forward!"

The poet of the camp uncoiled from the ragged camlet under which he had been musing rather than drowsing—a slender

youth of twenty-five, with long and massive hair, black and disordered, that rolled down upon his shoulders; and a merry dark eye that seemed to indicate the exuberance of animal life rather than thought or contemplation. He drank, though without seeming to desire the beverage, and was then assailed by Porgy for his song or story.

"You've been scribbling, I know, in your eternal book. Let's see what you've done."

The poet knew too well the party with whom he had to deal, and he indulged in no unnecessary affectation. He had become quite too well accustomed to the requisitions of the camp not to understand that, in moments like the present, each member had to make his contribution to the common stock of enjoyment. The hour had properly come for his. The animal excitement of the company had pretty well worked off, and the moods of nearly all—the physical man being somewhat exhausted—were prepared for more intellectual enjoyment. He professed his readiness, and the partisans flocked in to get proper places near the fire. They crowded close about the poet, some seated, others kneeling, and others in the background, who wished to see as well as hear, stretching themselves over the heads and shoulders of those more fortunate in having found places within the circle. Meanwhile, new lightwood brands were thrown upon the fire, and the flames blazed up gloriously, in singular contrast with the gloomy, but grotesque shadows of the surrounding forest. And thus, with an audience admirably disposed to be appreciative, nowise eager to be critical, and by no means persuaded that fault-finding is one of the most essential proofs of judgment, the poet of the partisans spun his yarn, in a rude, wild measure, well adapted to his audience and the times.

He gave them a mournful and exciting ballad, recounting one of the frequent events of the war, within their own experience—the murder of one of their most youthful comrades, while on his way to see his mistress, a beautiful girl of Black Mingo, who went by the name of the "Beauty of Britton's Neck." Her name was Britton, and that of her lover Calvert. As the ballad of our poet would occupy too much space to appear in these pages, we shall give the story in prose. Calvert left the camp,

with Marion's permission. It was remembered, afterward, that Marion, on granting leave to the young ensign, who was barely of age, said to him with a grave smile, "Be on the look-out, Harry, for it is one danger to the youth who goes frequently to see his mistress, that he teaches the way to others." Calvert, perhaps, forgot the advice. He fell into an ambush prepared for him by one Martin, who was also the lover of the damsel, and who had discovered the route usually pursued by Calvert. Martin was the leader of a small band of tories. He brought them together with great secrecy, and succeeded in capturing his rival, whom he finally slew in cold blood. Then, riding to the house of Mrs. Britton, he rudely thrust his trophies before the damsel—the sword, cap, and pistols of her lover, which were all well known to her. The scarf which she had wrought for him with her own hands, still moist with his blood, was also spread before her; and, overawed by the threats of the desperado, the mother of the girl not only consented that he should have her, but proceeded to insist upon her daughter's immediate acceptance of the hand which had been so freshly stained with the blood of her betrothed.

Mary Britton seemed to consent; but, watching her opportunity, she contrived to steal away from sight, to select and saddle one of the best horses in the stable, and to ride away to the camp of Marion, but a few miles off, without awakening the apprehensions of the tories. The partisans were soon and suddenly brought down upon Martin's gang, who were surprised and made captive to a man—Martin himself having but a few moments for prayer, and suffering death upon the spot where Calvert's body had been found.

Such was the ballad of our forest poet, which was of a sort to satisfy the critical requisitions of most of his companions—Lieutenant Porgy alone, perhaps, excepted. Not that he refused to receive pleasure from the narrative. He was not unwilling to admit that his sensibilities were touched quite as keenly as any of the rest; but his tastes kept pace with his sensibilities; and, while his comrades were breathing sentiments of indignation against the tories, he contented himself with showing that the poet was not perfect.

"I was one, the Lord he praised," exclaimed Pritchard, "at the stringing up of that vile beast, Martin. He died like a coward, though he lived like a tiger."

"Pretty much the case always. I've seldom known a man who hadn't *heart*, who had courage. I suppose, Dennison, you're as near the truth in that story as you could be. You have all the facts, and yet you are not truthful."

"How so, lieutenant?" inquired the poet with an air of pique.

"You lack simplicity. You have too many big words, and big figures. Now, the essence of the ballad is simplicity. This is particularly necessary in a performance where the utmost fullness and particularity of detail are insisted upon. Here, you do not generalize. You compass the end aimed at by elaborate touches. The effect is reached in a dramatic way; and you are called upon to detail the particular look, the attitudes, and, as closely as possible, the very words of the speaker."

"Would you have had me introduce all the oaths of the out-law?" demanded Dennison.

"No; but some of them are essential—enough to show him truthfully, and no more. What I mean to require throughout the ballad is that sort of detail which you have given us where you make the old lady take Mary Britton to the kitchen, to argue with her in favor of marrying Martin. When you make the poor girl say, 'You too against me, mother?' you reach the perfection of ballad writing. Had the whole story been written in this style, Dennison, I should have asked a copy at your hands, and should have preserved it in my wallet through the campaign."

"Along with his smoked venison and mouldy cheese," *sotto voce*, said the disappointed Dennison to one of his companions, as he turned away. A capacious yawn of Lieutenant Porgy was the fit finish of a criticism, of which we have given but a small specimen; and the party, following his example, dispersed to their several covers, seeking that sleep for which the poem and the critique had somewhat prepared them, just as the faintest streaks of morning were beginning to show themselves through the tops of the cypresses. With daylight the coon-hunters came in, bringing with them sundry trophies of their

success; and were soon after followed by another party who had just left Colonel Walton. Among these was Walter Griffin, a person of no small importance in the eyes of young Lance Frampton. The reason of this interest we shall see hereafter. Lance had been on the *qui vive* for some time, and met Griffin on his return, on the outskirts of the camp.

“And how is all, sir?” was the rather hesitating question

“All well, Lance, and Ellen sends you these.”

He took from his bosom, as he spoke, a pair of coarse cotton stockings, knitted recently, and handed them to the young man with a good-natured smile. The latter received them with a blush, and hurriedly thrust them into his own bosom. It was a curious gift from a maiden to her lover, but not less precious as a gift because of its homeliness. Let us leave the cypress camp to its repose for the next three hours. At noon, its inmates were all in motion, scouring fleetly across the country in a northerly direction.

CHAPTER XIX.

SKRIMMAGE.

ON the same day which witnessed the departure of our squad of partisans from the swamps of the Ashley Cypress, Singleton, otherwise Furness, took a friendly leave of his new acquaintance, Major Proctor, of the British army. We have seen with how much sympathy these young men came together; and we may add that not a single selfish feeling was at work, in either bosom, to impair the friendship thus quickly established. Our quondam loyalist repeated his injunctions to his friend, to be wary and patient in his encounters with his subtle enemy Vaughan, whose equal coolness and lack of principle were subjects of sufficient apprehension to his mind. But we have no need to renew his counsels and exhortations. It is enough, that the friends separated with real feelings of sympathy and interest, and that the advice of Singleton, well-meant and sensible, was such as Proctor promised to observe and follow. Then they parted with a warm shake of the hand; Proctor returning to "The Oaks," and Singleton, as loyalist captain of rifles, pushing over to Dorchester, where he was to join the train of wagons under the escort of Lieutenant Meadows, who brought him letters both from Balfour and Williamson. Those from the latter were of a character to keep up the *ruse* which had been agreed upon between himself and our partisan. They were written to the old acquaintance of Williamson in the interior, and were ostensibly designed to bring them over to the king's allegiance. We may add that they had been submitted to Balfour's inspection, as a matter of policy. Williamson had no real notion that his letters would ever reach their destination,

or, if they did so, that they could ever possibly help the British cause.

We shall not endeavor to detail the hourly progress of the detachment and train under the charge of Lieutenant Meadows, pursuing the well-known military route to Camden *via* Nelson's Ferry. They moved slowly; the events occurring were few and of little interest. Except at well-known places of rest, and in some few places where the labors of a plantation were still imperfectly carried on with a few slaves, the country seemed almost wholly abandoned. Singleton was rather pleased than otherwise to find in Lieutenant Meadows a very sublime specimen of the supercilious John Bull; a person of more decided horns than head, mulish, arrogant, cold, inflexible; one who had religiously imbibed, as with his mother's milk, all the usual scornful prejudices of his tribe toward the provincials, and who, accordingly, encouraged no sort of intimacy with the supposed captain of loyalists. This relieved our partisan from all that embarrassment which he might have felt, with regard to his future operations, had the lieutenant been a good fellow, and had he shown himself disposed to fall into friendly intercourse. But let us hurry to the event.

It was toward the close of the second day after the departure of the cavalcade from Dorchester, that Meadows had the first intimation of probable danger from an enemy. His warning, however, only came with the blow, and quite too late to allow him either to evade the danger or properly to guard against it. Singleton had galloped off to the front, and was pursuing his way entirely alone, some two hundred yards in advance of the party. He had reason to anticipate that the moment drew nigh for the encounter with his followers, and he preferred to withdraw from close proximity with one who was not only indisposed to show himself companionable, but who might, by possibility, discover in the struggle much more of the truth than it was desirable for our partisan—still as Furness—that he should know. The whole train, with its escort, nearly equally distributed in front and rear, had entered a long, close, circuitous defile in a thickly-set forest, when Singleton was apprised, by a well-known whistle, that the moment was at hand for the attack. He was;

accordingly, not a whit startled at the wild yell and the sharp shots with which the onset was begun.

“Marion’s men! Marion’s men! Hurrah!” was the slogan which startled suddenly the great echoes of the wood, and caused an instant sensation, only short of utter confusion, in the ranks of the British detachment.

But Meadows, with all his faults of taste and temper, was something of a soldier, and never lost his composure for a moment. He hurried forward, with the first signal of alarm, and shouted to his men with a cheerful courage, while he sought to bring them to a closer order and to confront the enemy, who were yet scarcely to be seen. Singleton, meanwhile, wheeled about, as if suffering greatly from surprise, yet drawing his sword, nevertheless, and waving it above his head with the air of a person in very desperate circumstances. He was then distinctly seen to rush boldly upon the assailing Americans, who had now completely interposed themselves between him and the British.

It will not need that we should follow *his* particular movements. It will be quite as easy to conjecture them. Let us give our attention wholly to the affair with the detachment, which was short and sharp as it was sudden. They were assailed equally in front and rear. At first, as he beheld the cavalry of the partisans, and heard their bugles sounding on every hand, Meadows conceived himself to be dealing wholly with that description of force. He, accordingly, commanded his wagons to wheel about and throw themselves across the road at both extremities, thus seeking to close all the avenues which would facilitate the charge. But he reckoned without his host. His operation was only in part successful; since, before the movement could be fully made, the troopers were already cutting down his wagoners. But this was not all. The rangers of Singleton began to show themselves, darkly green, or in their blue uniforms, among the trees which occupied the intervals, and every sharp crack of the rifle brought down its chosen victim. Meadows himself was already slightly wounded in his bridle-arm, and, wheeling about his steed in the direction of the shot, he found himself confronted by a group just making their way out of cover, and darting boldly upon him.

He clapped spurs to his steed and met the leader of the assailants, who, on foot, had reached the open road-space, and was entirely withdrawn from the shelter of the thicket. This person was no other than our epicurean friend, Lieutenant Porgy, who, with an audacity quite inconsistent with his extreme obesity, advanced with sword uplifted to the encounter with the British lieutenant. A single clash of swords, and the better-tempered steel of the Englishman cut sheer through the inferior metal of the American, sending one half of the shattered blade into the air and descending upon the cheek of Porgy, inflicting a slight gash, and taking off the tip of his ear. Another blow might have been fatal. Meadows had recovered from the first movement, and his blade was already whirled aloft for the renewal of the stroke, when Porgy, drawing a pistol from his belt, shot the horse of his enemy through the head. The animal fell suddenly upon his knees, and then rolled over perfectly dead. The sword of Meadows struck harmlessly upon the earth, he himself being pinioned to the ground by one of his legs, upon which the dead animal lay. In this predicament, vainly endeavoring to wield and to use his sword, he threatened Porgy at his approach. The latter, still grasping his own broken weapon, which was reduced to the hilt and some eight inches only of the blade, totally undeterred by the demonstration of the Briton, rushed incontinently upon him, and, in a totally unexpected form of attack, threw his gigantic bulk over the body of the prostrate Meadows, whom he completely covered. The other struggled fiercely beneath, and, getting his sword-arm free, made several desperate efforts to use his weapon; but Porgy so completely bestraddled him that he succeeded only in inflicting some feeble strokes upon the broad shoulders of the epicure, who requited them with a severe blow upon the mouth with the iron hilt of his broken sword.

“It’s no use, my fine fellow; your faith may remove mountains, but your surrender only shall remove me. You are captive to my bow and spear. Halloo ‘nough!’ now, if you wish for mercy.”

And, stretching himself out on every hand, with arms extended and legs somewhat raised on the body of the dead horse

Porgy looked down into the very eyes of his prisoner; his great beard, meanwhile, well sprinkled with gray, lying in masses upon the mouth and filling the nostrils of the Englishman, who was thus in no small danger of suffocation.

"Will nobody relieve me from this elephant?" gasped the half-strangled Meadows.

"Elephant!" roared Porgy. "By the powers, but you shall feel my grinders!"

His good humor was changed to gall by the offensive expression, and he had already raised the fragment of his broken sword, meaning to pummell the foe into submission, when his arm was arrested by Singleton, now appearing in his appropriate character and costume. Meadows was extricated from horse and elephant at the same moment, and by the same friendly agency, and rose from the ground sore with bruises, and panting with heat and loss of breath.

"It is well for him, Colonel Singleton, that you made your appearance. I had otherwise beaten him to a mummy. Would you believe it?—he called me an elephant! Me! Me an elephant!"

"He had need to do so, lieutenant; and this was rather a compliment than otherwise to your mode of warfare. He felt yours to be a power comparable only to the mighty animal to which he had reference. It was the natural expression of his feelings, I am sure, and not by way of offence."

"I forgive him," was the response of Porgy, as he listened to this explanation.

"Colonel Singleton, I believe, sir?" said Meadows, tendering his sword. "The fortune of the day is yours, sir. Here is my sword. I am Lieutenant Meadows, late in command of this detachment."

Singleton restored the weapon graciously, and addressed a few courteous sentences to his prisoner; but, by this time, Porgy discovered that his ear had lost a thin but important slice from its pulpy extremity. His annoyance was extreme, and his anger rose as he discovered the full nature of his loss.

"Sir—Lieutenant Meadows," said he—"you shall give me personal satisfaction for this outrage the moment you are ex-

changed. You have done me an irreparable injury ! You have marked me for life, sir—given me the brand of a horse-thief—taken off one of my ears ! One of my ears !”

“Not so, my dear lieutenant,” said Singleton. “Only the smallest possible tip from the extremity. Once healed it will never be seen. There is no sort of deformity. You were rather *full* in that quarter, and could spare something of the development.”

“Were I sure of that !”

“It is so, believe me. The thing will never be observed.”

“To have one’s ears or nose slit, sir”—to the Briton—“is, I have always been taught, the greatest indignity that could be inflicted upon a gentleman.”

“I am sorry, sir,” said Meadows—“very sorry. But it was the fortune of war. Believe me, I had no idea of making such a wound.”

“I can understand that, sir. You were intent only in taking off my head. I am satisfied that you did not succeed in that object, since, next to losing my ear, I should have been particularly uncomfortable at the loss of my head. But, if my ear had been maimed, sir, I should have had my revenge. And even now, should there really be a perceptible deficiency, there shall be more last blows between us.”

The British lieutenant bowed, politely, as if to declare his readiness to afford any necessary satisfaction, but said nothing in reply. Singleton suffered the conversation to go no farther ; but, drawing Porgy aside, rebuked him for the rude manner of his address to a man whose visage he himself had marked for life.

“You have laid his mouth open, broken his teeth, and injured his face for ever ; and he a young fellow, too, probably unmarried, to whom unbroken features are of the last importance.”

“But my dear colonel, think of my ear ; fancy it smitten in two, as I did, and you will allow for all my violence. The mark of the pillory ought to suffice to make any white man desperate.”

It is probable that Meadows, when he became aware of the true state of his mouth, and felt his own disfigurements, was

even more unforgiving than Porgy. But we must not, in this episode, lose sight of the field of battle. When our epicurean had secured the person of the British lieutenant, the affair was nearly over. The surprise had been complete. The conflict was as short as it was sharp. The ambush was so well laid as to render resistance almost unavailing; yet had it been desperately made, and the victory was not won by our partisans without the loss of several gallant fellows. The followers of Meadows, taking the example of their leader, fought quite as long and as stubbornly as himself, without having the fortune to succumb to such a remarkable antagonist. A brave sergeant, with a small squad, made a fierce effort to cut through the partisan horse, but was slain, with all his party, in the attempt. This was the most serious part of the British loss. The detachment was so completely hemmed in on every side, that recklessness and desperation only could have found a justification for fighting at all. A prudent soldier would have been prepared to yield on the first discovery of his situation, and thus avoided any unnecessary effusion of blood. But Meadows was brave without being circumspect. His own account of the affair, as contained in a letter to Balfour, will answer in the place of any farther details of our own.

“ To his Excellency, NESBITT BALFOUR, ESQ.

“ SIR : It is with feelings of inexpressible mortification, that I have to inform you of the complete overthrow and capture of the detachment under my command, by an overwhelming force of the rebels under Colonel Singleton, of Marion's Brigade. We were met on the route to Nelson's Ferry, toward sunset of the second day after leaving Dorchester, and attacked in a close defile near Ravenel's plantation. We suffered no surprise, our advance feeling their way with all possible caution, and firmly led by Sergeant Camperdown, who, I am sorry to mention, fell finally, mortally wounded, in a desperate effort to cut his way through the ranks of the enemy. Several of my brave followers perished in the same desperate attempt. All of them fought steadily and bravely, but without success, against the formidable numbers by which we were surrounded. Many of the reb-

els were slain in the engagement, being seen to drop in the conflict; but I have no means of ascertaining their precise loss, since they have studiously concealed their dead, having borne them away for burial to the thickets. Our loss, I regret to say, has been out of all proportion to our force; the desperate valor of our men provoking the enemy to the most unsparing severity. Eleven of them were slain outright, and as many more are likely to perish from their wounds. Three of the teamsters were cut down by the rebels while calling for quarters. I myself am wounded, though not seriously, in my right shoulder and face; and I am suffering severely from bruises, in consequence of my horse, which was killed, falling upon me. I greatly fear that Captain Furness, of the loyalists, is also among the slain. I have seen nothing of him since the action, and the enemy can give no account of him. He behaved very well in the affair, and with a bravery not unworthy his majesty's regular service. He was exposed to particular peril, as, with great imprudence, he persisted in riding in advance of the party, leaving a considerable interval between himself and the command. He was thus cut off from all assistance. When last seen, he was contending unequally with no less than half a dozen of the rebel troopers, who finally forced him out of the field and into the forest, where he was either slain or succeeded in making his escape. It is my hope that he has done so. He is certainly not among the prisoners. Colonel Singleton was not at the head of the assailing party. He came up and took command just as the affair was over. He treats us with a courtesy and attention quite unusual with the rebels; and holds out to me the prospect of an early exchange. He has already hurried off the captured wagons, by the shortest route, to the Santee; though I perceive that one of them has been sent off in the opposite direction. I trust that your excellency will believe that I have been guilty of no remissness or neglect of duty. My conscience acquits me, though unfortunate, of any culpable disregard to the safety of my charge. I have the honor to be your excellency's most obedient humble servant,

“CH. MEADOWS.”

This letter was written the day after the action. Of the rage and chagrin of Balfour, on receiving it, we shall learn hereafter. The reader will note that portion of its contents which describes the game—unsuspected by the Briton—which was played by the rebel colonel. When apparently forced from the field, he simply retired to a thicket, where he changed his costume, re-appearing, shortly after, on the field in his own proper character. The alteration in his dress, speech, and general manner, was so thorough, as effectually to deceive the British lieutenant, who showed himself as respectful to the partisan colonel as he had been cavalier before to the same person in the character of a simple captain of loyalists.

The affair ended, Singleton proceeded to secure his captives, send off the captured wagons, and attend to the wants of his wounded and the burial of his dead. While engaged in this melancholy duty, he was suddenly called away by Lance Frampton, who conducted him into the adjoining thicket. The youth could scarcely speak from emotion, as he communicated the intelligence of the mortal hurts of Walter Griffin. The dying man was quite sensible as Singleton drew nigh. He lay beneath an oak, upon a heap of moss, which had been raked up hurriedly to soften that bed of earth, to the coldness and hardness of which he should be so soon utterly insensible. His friends were around him, satisfied, as well as himself, that assistance would be vain. As Singleton and Lance Frampton drew nigh, the youth went silently and took his place at the head of the sufferer. Griffin had done good service in the brigade. He was a great favorite with his superiors. Rescued by Singleton from the hands of a blood-thirsty tory, named Gaskens, who had made himself, his wife, and daughter, prisoners, and who was actually preparing to hang him on the spot, Griffin acknowledged a debt of gratitude to the partisan, which rendered his fidelity a passion. His words, on the approach of Singleton, declared his sorrows, not at his own fate, but that his services were about to end.

“I’ve fought my last fight, colonel; I’ve done all I could. If you say I have done my duty, I shall die satisfied.”

“That I can safely say, Griffin. You have done more than

your duty You have served faithfully, like a true man; and your country shall hear of your services. Can we do nothing for you, Griffin?"

"I have it here, colonel—and here!"—his hands pointing to his side and breast. "Here is a shot, and here a bayonet stab; both deep enough. I feel that all's over; and all that I want is that you should send word to my poor wife and daughter. There's my watch, colonel—I've given it to Lance to carry to them—and two guineas in money. It's all I have—not much—but will help to buy corn for them some day in a bad season. Will you send Lance, colonel, and a letter, if you please?"

"It shall be done, Griffin; and I will add a little to the money, for the sake of your family. You've served long and well, like the rest of us, with little pay. The money-chest of the British that has just fallen into our hands makes us richer than usual. Your two guineas shall be made ten. Your comrades will see that your wife and child shall never suffer."

The poor fellow was much affected. He took the hand of Singleton and carried it feebly to his heart.

"I'm sorry to leave you, colonel, now, while every man is wanted. You will have years of fighting, and I sha'n't be there to help you. Yes! I will be there! Oh! colonel, if the spirits of the dead may look on earthly things, after the earth has covered the body, I'll go with you over the old tracks. I'll be nigh you when you are drawing trigger on the enemy; and if I can whisper to you where the danger lies, or shout to you when the bugle sounds the charge, you shall still hear the voice of Wat Griffin rising with the rest, "Marion's men, boys! Hurrah! Marion for ever!"

In a few hours after he was silent. He was buried in the spot where he died, beneath that great old mossy oak of the forest—buried at midnight, by the light of blazing torches; and well did his comrades understand the meaning of that wild sob from Lance Frampton, as the first heavy clod was thrown into the shallow grave upon the uncoffined corse, wrapped only in his garments as he wore them in the fight.

The night was nearly consumed in this mournful occupation. British and Americans shared a common grave. The partisans

had lost several of their best men, though by no means the large number which Meadows had assumed in his letter to Balfour. In silence, the survivors turned away from the cemetery which they had thus newly established in the virgin forest, and retired, each to his rude couch among the trees, to meditate rather than to sleep. Two of the partisans, however, were drawn aside by Singleton for farther conference that night. These were Lieutenant Porgy and the young ensign, Lance Frampton. To these he assigned a double duty. With a small detachment, Porgy was to take charge of a wagon with stores, designed for Colonel Walton, whom he was to seek out between the Edisto and the Savannah. In order to effect his progress with safety, he was specially counselled to give a wide berth to Dorchester—to make a considerable circuit above, descending only when on the Edisto. Singleton was rightly apprehensive that the report of Meadows' disaster would set all the cavalry of Dorchester and Charleston in motion. The wagon was to be secured in the swamps of Edisto until Walton could be found; and, with the duty of delivering it into his keeping fairly executed, Porgy, with Frampton, was to seek out the dwelling of Griffin's wife and daughter, who dwelt in the neighborhood of the Edisto, conveying a letter from his colonel, and the little treasure of which the poor fellow died possessed—Singleton having added the eight guineas which he had promised to the dying man; a gift, by the way, which he could not have made but for the timely acquisition of the hundred and fifty found in the British money-chest.

The duty thus assigned to Porgy and Frampton was one of interest to both parties; though the corpulent lieutenant sighed at the prospect of hard riding over ground so recently compassed which lay before him. At first he would have shirked the responsibility; but a secret suggestion of his own thought rapidly caused a change in his opinions. To Lance Frampton, who stood in a very tender relation to Ellen Griffin, the daughter of the deceased, the task was one equally painful and grateful. To Porgy, the interest which he felt was due to considerations the development of which must be left to future chapters.

CHAPTER XX.

LOYALIST BEAUTIES IN CHARLESTON.

SINGLETON was compelled to forego the small but valuable successes which he had been pursuing, by a summons from Marion. The latter had, by this time, provoked the peculiar hostility of the British general. Cornwallis sent Tarleton in pursuit of him with a formidable force; and the "swamp-fox" was temporarily reduced to the necessity either of skulking closely through his swamps, or of taking refuge in North Carolina. We shall not follow his fortunes, and shall content ourselves with referring to them simply, in order to account for Singleton's absence from that field, along the Santee and the Ashley, in which we have hitherto seen him engaged, and where his presence was looked for and confidently expected by more than one anxious person. He had made certain engagements with Williamson—subject always to the vicissitudes of the service—which required him to give that gentleman another meeting as soon as possible.

In the hope of this meeting, we find Williamson very frequently at the Quarter House, or at the tavern immediately above it, known as the Eight-Mile House. Sometimes he went alone on this pilgrimage, at others he was accompanied by companions whom he could not avoid, from among the officers of the British garrison. Most commonly, these visits were ostensibly for pleasure. Pic-nics and other parties were formed in the city, which brought out to these favored places a goodly cavalcade, male and female, who rejoiced in rural breakfasts and dinners, and gave a loose to their merriment in the wildest rustic dances. The damsels belonging to loyalist families read-

ily joined in these frolics. It was a point of honor with the "rebel ladies" to avoid them; a resolution which the British officers vainly endeavored to combat. Balfour himself frequently strove to engage Katharine Walton as one of a party especially devised in her honor, but without success.

It is time, by the way, that we should recall that young maiden to the reader's recollection. She was received into the family of the venerable Mrs. Dick Singleton, the aunt of her lover. This old lady was a woman of Roman character, worthy to be a mother of the Gracchi. She was sprung of the best Virginia stock, and had lost her husband in the Indian wars which ravaged the frontier during the last great struggle of the British with the French colonies. She was firmly devoted to the Revolutionary movement—a calm, frank, firm woman, who, without severity of tone or aspect, was never seen to smile. She had survived some agonies, the endurance of which sufficiently served to extinguish all tendencies to mirth. Her dwelling in Church street, in the neighborhood of Tradd, was a favorite point of reunion among the patriots of both sexes. Hither, in the dark days which found their husbands, their brothers, their sons in exile, in the camp, or in the prison-ship, came the Rutledges, the Laurens', the Izards, and most of the well-known and famous families of the Low Country of Carolina, to consult as to the future, to review their condition, consider their resources, and, if no more, "to weep their sad bosoms empty." Katharine Walton was not an unworthy associate of these. She was already known to the most of them personally, and by anecdotes which commended her love of country to their own; and they crowded about her with a becoming welcome when she came.

These were not her only visitors. She was an heiress and a beauty, and consequently a *belle*. Balfour himself, though past the period of life when a sighing lover is recognisable, was pleased to forget his years and station in the assumption of this character. He was followed, at a respectful distance, by others, whom it better suited. There were the Campbells, the one known as "mad," the other as "fool," or "crazy" Campbell; there was Lachlin O'Fergus, a captain of the guards, a fierce, young, red-headed Scotchman: there was the gallant Major

Barry, *le bel esprit* of the British garrison, a wit and rhymester; and his inseparable, or shadow, Capt. M'Mahon, a gentleman who, with the greatest amount of self-esteem in the world, might have been willing to yield up his own individuality, could he have got in place of it that of his friend. And Barry was almost as appreciative as M'Mahon. They were the moral Siamese of the garrison, who perpetually quoted each other, and bowed, as if through self-respect, invariably when they did so. There were others who, like these, with them and after them, bowed and sighed at the new altars of beauty which, perforce, were set up when Katharine Walton reached the city; and the house of Mrs. Singleton, from having hitherto been only the sad resort of the unhappy, who mourned over the distresses of the country, was now crowded, on all possible occasions, by the triumphant, whose iron heels were pressed upon its bosom. Nor could the venerable widow object to this intrusion, or discourage it by a forbidding voice or aspect. She had been long since taught to know that the "rebel ladies" were only tolerated by the conquerors, who would rejoice in any pretext by which they would seem justified in driving forth a class whose principles were offensive, and whose possessions were worthy of confiscation. She resigned herself with a good grace to annoyances which were unavoidable, and was consoled for her meekness as she discovered that Katharine Walton was as little disposed to endure her visitors as herself. She esteemed the tribe at its true value.

It was seldom that the "loyalist ladies" showed themselves in the circles of Mrs. Singleton. They were held to have lost *caste* by the position which they had taken, and, perhaps, felt some misgivings themselves that the forfeiture was a just one.— It was seldom that they desired to intrude themselves; or, rather, it was seldom that this desire was displayed. They held a rival set, and endeavored to console themselves for their exclusion from circles which were enchanted by a prescriptive *prestige* of superiority, by the gayety and splendor of their festivities. They formed the *materiel* and *personnel* of the great parties given by General Leslie, by the Colonels Cruden and Balfour, and by other leading officers of the British army, when

desirous of conciliating favor, or relieving the tedium of garrison life.

As a ward of Colonel Cruden, and measurably in the power of Colonel Balfour, it was not possible for Katharine Walton wholly to escape the knowledge of, and even some degree of intimacy with, some of the ladies of the British party. A few of them found their way, accordingly, to Mrs. Singleton's. Some of these were persons whose political sympathies were not active, and were due wholly to the direction taken by their parents. Others were of the British party because it was the most brilliant; and others, again, because of warmer individual feelings, who had found objects of love and worship where patriotism—the more stately virtue—could discover nothing but hostility and evil.

Of these persons we may name a few of whom the local tradition still entertains the most lively recollections. Conspicuous among these damsels, known as "loyalist" belles of Charleston, during its occupation by the British army, were "the Herveys;" three sisters, all of a rich, exuberant, voluptuous beauty, and one of them, at least, the most beautiful of the three, of a wild and passionate temper. "Moll Harvey," as she was familiarly known, was a splendid woman, of dark, Cleopatra-like eyes and carriage, and of tresses long, massive, and glossily black as the raven's when his wing is spread for flight in the evening sunlight. A more exquisite figure never floated through the mazes of the dance, making the eye drunk with delirium to pursue her motion. She was of subtle intellect also, keen and quick at repartee, with a free, spontaneous fancy, and a spirit as bold and reckless as ever led wilful fancy wandering. She had been, for a long time, the favorite of Balfour. He had sighed to her, and followed her with addresses that only seemed to forbear the last avowal. But this, though still forborne, was still anticipated hourly by all parties, the lady herself among them. That Balfour still refrained was a matter of common surprise, and to be accounted for in two ways only. Though of the best family connections, she had no fortune. This might be a sufficient reason why he should forbear to unite himself irrevocably with her, or with any woman; for the commandant of Charleston was

notorious for his equal greediness of gain and his ostentatious expenditure. There was yet another reason. Moll Harvey had made herself somewhat too conspicuous by her flirtations with no less a person than Prince William, then in the navy; better known to us in recent periods as William IV., king of Great Britain.* She might have been only vain and frivolous, but the mouths of public censure whispered of errors of still graver character. She certainly gave much occasion to suspicion. That the prince was madly fond of her is beyond question. It was even said that he had proposed to her a secret marriage, but that the proud, vain spirit of the girl would listen to nothing short of the public ceremonial. Such was the *on dit* among those most friendly and most inclined to defend her conduct. This may have been wild and daring rather than loose or licentious; but a woman is always in danger who prides herself in going beyond her sex. Enough, that public conjecture, seeking to account for Balfour's reluctance to propose for her hand, while evidently passionately fond of her person, was divided between his known avarice, and his doubts of the propriety of her conduct in the flirtation with his prince. Such were his relations with Moll Harvey at the period when he first saw Katharine Walton, and was struck with the twofold attractions of her beauty and her fortune.

There were three other young ladies, belonging to the British party, with whom Katharine Walton shortly found herself brought occasionally into contact. One of these was Miss Mary Roupell, who divided the sway over the hearts of the garrison very equally with her competitors. She was the daughter of George Roupell, a firm and consistent royalist, a man of worth and character, who, before the Revolution, had been one of the king's council (colony), and held the lucrative office of post-master. Mary Roupell was a proud beauty, as haughty as she was lovely, and particularly successful in the ball-room. It was never her fortune, on such occasions, to remain unnoticed, a meek, neglected flower against the wall.

Paulina Phelps was another of these loyalist beauties. She was a lady of handsome fortune, and of one of the most respect-

* Traditional.

table families. With many admirers, she was particularly distinguished by the conquest of one of the most dashing gallants of the garrison. This was Major Campbell—Major Archibald Campbell, or, as he was better known, “Mad Archy,” or “Mad Campbell”—a fellow of equal daring and eccentricity; his dashing and frequent adventures of a startling nature securing for him his very appropriate nickname. We shall have occasion to record some of these adventures in the course of our narrative, by which we shall justify its propriety.

There was still another damsel, ranked among the loyalist ladies of Charleston, whom we should not properly style a *belle*, since she was not acknowledged to possess this distinction. Yet her beauty and grace were worthy of it. Ella Monckton was a blonde and a beauty; but the eager impulse of her nature, which might have carried her forward to conquests—at least secured her some of the social triumphs in which her companions delighted—had been checked by the circumstances of her condition. Her family was reduced; her mother lived upon a pittance, after having been accustomed to prosperity, and her brother, a youth a year younger than his sister, obtained his support in the employment of Balfour, as his secretary. Ella was just twenty years old, with features which looked greatly younger, an almost infantine face, but in which, in the deep lustrous depths of her dark blue and dewy eyes, might be read the presence of the ripest and loveliest thoughts of womanhood and intellect. She was quiet and retiring—sensitively so—shy to shrinking; yet she united to this seemingly enfeebling characteristic a close, earnest faculty of observation, a just, discriminating judgment, high resolves, deliberate thought, and a warm, deeply-feeling, and loving nature. She was one of those, one of the very few among the rival faction, who commended themselves, in any degree, to the sympathies of Katharine Walton. Yet, properly speaking, Ella Monckton had no active sympathies with the British party. Her father had been a supporter and servant of the crown, and she rather adopted his tendencies tacitly than by any exercise of will. That her brother should find his employment with Balfour, should be another reason for her loyalty. There were yet other reasons still, which we must

leave to future occasions to discover. Shy and sensitive as was the spirit of Ella Monckton, she was singularly decisive in the adoption of her moods. These were rarely changeable or capricious. They grew out of her sympathies and affections; and she was one of those who carry an earnest and intense nature under an exterior that promised nothing of the sort. Her heart already deeply interested in the business most grateful and most important of all to the woman—her affections involved beyond recall—she was as resolute in all matters where these were concerned, as if life and death were on the issue. And, with such a heart as hers, the issue could be in the end no other than life and death. But these hints will suffice for the present, furnishing clews to other chapters.

CHAPTER XXI.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

It was late at night. The close of the day in Charleston had been distinguished by the return of Balfour from Dorchester. Waiting on his moods, rather than rendering him any required services, his secretary, Alfred Monckton, lingered until abruptly dismissed. He hurried away, as soon as his permission was obtained, to the ancient family abode, one of the remotest, to the west, at the foot of Broad street. The dwelling, though worn, wanting paint, and greatly out of repair, attested, in some degree, the former importance of his family. It was a great wooden fabric, such as belonged particularly to the region and period, capable of accommodating half a dozen such families as that by which it was now occupied. The Widow Monckton, with her two children, felt all her loneliness. She had waited for Alfred till a late hour, until exhaustion compelled her to retire; foregoing one of her most grateful exercises, that of welcoming her son to her arms, and bestowing upon him her nightly blessing. He was her hope, as he was her chief support. She well knew how irksome were his labors, under the eye of such a man as Balfour. And still she knew not half. But her knowledge was sufficient to render her gratitude to her boy as active as her love; and once more repeating the wish, for the third time, "How I wish that Alfred would come!" she left her good-night and blessing for him with Ella, his sister, who declared her purpose to sit up for him.

This, indeed, was her constant habit. It was in compliance equally with her inclination and duty. A tender and confiding sympathy swayed both their hearts, and the youth loved the

sister none the less because love between them was a duty. She was his elder by a single year; and, shy and shrinking as was her temperament, it was yet calculated for the control of his. Yet he was quick and passionate in his moods, and it was only with the most determined reference to the condition of his aged mother, her dependence upon his patient industry and his submission, that he was able to endure a situation which, but too frequently, was made to wound his pride and outrage his sensibilities. Balfour was an adept in making all about him feel their obligations and dependence.

Alfred Monckton was of slight frame and delicate appearance. In this respect, he resembled his sister; but, otherwise, there was physically but little similarity between them. While she was a blonde, of a complexion as delicate as that of the rose-leaf, the crimson blood betraying itself through her cheeks at every pulsation, he was dark and swarthy, with keen, quivering black eyes, and hair of the blackest hue and the richest gloss. A slight mustache, little deeper than a pencil line, darkened upon his lip; but nowhere was his cheek or chin rendered manly by a beard. This description must suffice. So much, perhaps, is necessary in connection with the character which we propose to draw.

His sister received him with a kiss and an embrace

“You have been drinking wine, Alfred?”

“Yes, Ella. And I sometimes think that the liquor will hoke me, as I drink at the board of Balfour.”

“And why, pray?”

“He *bids* me drink, Ella; he does not ask. He *commands*; and you can scarcely understand how such a command should be offensive, when you know that I relish old Madeira as well as any one. But so it is. It is as if he would compensate me, in this manner, for the scorn, the contempt, the frequently haughty and almost brutal insolence of his tone and manner. How I hate him!”

“Bear with him, my brother, for our mother’s sake.”

“Do I not bear, Ella? Ah! you know not half.”

“Nor would I know, Alfred, unless I could relieve you. But he has, then, returned?”

"Yes; late this evening. He comes back in great good humor. He talks nothing now but of the famous beauty, Katharine Walton. She is his new passion; and Moll Harvey is in great danger of losing her ascendancy. Miss Walton is wealthy as well as handsome. I have not seen her; but she is already in the city."

"In the city, Alfred?" was the inquiry, in tones singularly subdued and slow, as if they required some effort on the part of the speaker to bring them forth.

"Yes. It appears that she arrived yesterday or the day before. But I heard nothing of it till he came. He has already been to see her. She lodges with her kinswoman, Mrs. Dick Singleton, where you may have an opportunity of meeting her."

"I do not care to meet her, Alfred," was the hastily-uttered answer; and the sounds were so sad, that the youth, placing a hand on each of her cheeks, and looking steadily into her large blue eyes, inquired, curiously and tenderly—

"And why, Ellen, my sister—why have you no curiosity to see the beauty whom the whole city will run to see!"

"That alone should be a sufficient reason."

"Ah! but there is yet another, my sister. Your voice is very sad to night. Ella, my dear Ella, beware of your little heart. I am not a sufficient counsellor for it, I know; but I can see when it suffers, and I can give you warning to beware. You do not tell me enough, Ella. You do not confide sufficiently to your brother—yet I see!—I see and fear!"

"What do you fear, Alfred?"

"I fear that you are destined to suffer even more than you have done. I have other news to tell you, which, if I mistake not your feelings, will make you still more unhappy."

"Do not—do not keep me in suspense, Alfred."

"I will not. You will know it sooner or later, and it is best always, to hear ill news at first, from friendly lips. Major Proctor is disgraced, and that subtle, snake-like fellow, Vaughan, is now in command of the post at Dorchester!"

The maiden clasped her hands together in speechless suffering.

"Ah, Ella! I was afraid of this. I have seen, for a long

time, how much you thought of Major Proctor; yet you told me nothing."

"And what was I to tell you? That I loved hopelessly; that my heart was yielded to one who had no heart to give; that I had been guilty of the unmaidenly weakness of loving where I could have no hope of return; that, with the fondness of the woman, I lacked her delicacy, and suffered the world to see that passion which I should never have suffered myself to feel until my own heart had been solicited! Oh! Alfred, was this the confession that my brother would have had me make? You have it now! I have shown you all! Would it have availed me anything that I had told you this before?"

This was passionately spoken, and the girl covered her eyes with her hands as she made the confession; while an audible sob, at the conclusion, denoted the convulsive force of that emotion which she struggled vainly to suppress.

"Ah, my poor, sweet sister! It is what I feared. I have not studied your heart in vain. And, what is worse, I can bring you no consolation. I can not even give you counsel. Proctor, it is said, is devoted to Miss Walton. It is through his passion for her that he is disgraced. He is said to have helped her father in his escape at Dorchester, and is to be court-martialed for the offence. The charge is a very serious one. It amounts to something more than neglect of duty. It is a charge of treason, and may peril his life; at all events, it perils his reputation as a man of honor and an officer."

"And this is *all* the doing of that venomous creature, Vaughan! I *know* it, Alfred. This bold, bad man, has been at work, for a long while, spinning his artful web about the generous and unsuspecting nature of Proctor. Can nothing be done to save him?"

"I do not see how *we* can do anything."

"Do not speak so coldly, Alfred. Something *must* be done. You know not how much may be done by a resolute and devoted spirit, however feeble, where it honors—where it loves! The mouse may relieve the lion, Alfred."

"You speak from your heart, Ella, not from your thought."

"And the heart has a faculty of strength, Alfred, superior to

any thought. *You* may do something, my brother. *You will* do something. If we are only in possession of the counsels of the enemy, we may contrive to baffle them. *You will* see—you will hear. *You will* know where Balfour and Vaughan plant their snares; and we shall be able to give warning, in due season, to the noble gentleman whom they would destroy."

"Ella, my sister," replied the other gravely, "you forget that I am, in a measure, the confidant of Balfour. It will not do for me to betray his secrets. I have hitherto withheld nothing from you. I have spoken to you as my other self; but, remember, these are not my secrets which I confide to you. They must be sacred. It is impossible that I should communicate to you the counsels of my employer, with the apprehension that you will use your knowledge to defeat them."

The warm, conscious blood rushed into the face of the maiden. She hesitated; she felt a keen sting of self-reproach as she listened; but, the next moment, she replied with an argument that has frequently found its justification in morality.

"But we are not to keep the counsels of the wicked. We are not to keep faith with those who aim to do evil. It is but right and just that we should seek to warn the innocent against the snare spread for them by the guilty."

Alfred Moncton was not equal to the moral argument. He waived it accordingly.

"But you forget, my sister, that the innocence of Major Proctor rests only on our assumption. Everybody believes him guilty. Of the facts we know nothing, except that they show against him. He has suffered a rebel to escape from justice even at the place of execution. He is reputed to be a devoted lover of this rebel's daughter. He was a frequent visitor at her residence, to the neglect of his duties in the garrison. The consequences are serious. All the loyalist families cry out against him; and the general impression of his guilt seems to be borne out by the facts and appearances."

"I will not believe it, Alfred."

"There, again, your heart speaks, Ella! Ah, my poor sister I would that you had never seen this man!"

She exclaimed hastily, and in husky accents—

“Perhaps I too wish that I had never seen him. But it is too late for that, Alfred. I can not control my heart; and to you, I am not ashamed to confess that I love him fondly and entirely. You must help me to serve him, Alfred—help me to save him.”

“And yet if he loves another!”

“Be it even so, Alfred, and still we must save him if we can. It is not love that for ever demands its recompense. It is love only when prepared for every sacrifice. I must seek to serve in this instance, though the service may seem wholly to be without profit to myself; and you must assist me, though, perhaps, at some peril to yourself. But there will be no peril to you really, as I shall manage the affair; and where the heart is satisfied in the service, it must needs be profitable. The love need not be the less warm and devoted, because felt for a being who is wholly ignorant of its existence. Let Proctor be happy with this rebel lady if he may. It is enough that he knows me not—that he loves me not! Why should he not love another? Why not be happy with her? The world speaks well of his choice. May they be happy!”

“It is not so certain that he loves hopefully, Ella. On the contrary, much is said against it.”

“Ah, believe it not! She is sensible, they say; she will scarcely have listened to Proctor with indifference.”

“You will call upon her, Ella?”

“No; that is impossible.”

“How will you avoid it? She is the ward now of Colonel Cruden; and both Balfour and himself will expect all the loyalist ladies to do honor to one whom they have so much desire to win over to the cause. Besides, she lives with Mrs. Dick Singleton, and mother’s intimacy with her—”

“Is not exactly what it has been. They still visit; but there is a spice of bitterness now in the eternal discussion of their politics; and they have tacitly foregone their intimacies. An occasional call is all that either makes. Still, mother will have to go; but there is no obligation upon me to do likewise.”

“And have you really no curiosity to see this beauty?”

“No—yes! The very greatest. I would see, search, and

study every charm, and seek to discover in what the peculiar fascination lies which has won that cold, proud heart. But I fear—I tremble, Alfred, lest I should learn to hate the object that he loves.”

“My poor Ella! what shall I do for you?”

“Do for *him*, Alfred. You can do nothing for me. I must do for myself. If I have been weak, I will show that I can be strong. I will not succumb to my feebleness. I will overcome it. You will do much for me, if you will assist me in saving Major Proctor from his enemies.”

“And wherefore should I peril myself for one who has done you such a wrong?”

“There will be no peril to you, dear Alfred; and for the wrong, he has done me none. It is I, only, who have wronged myself.”

“Ay, but there is peril—nay, little less than my sacrifice, Ella, which may follow from my helping you in behalf of Proctor. And I see not why *I* should risk anything in behalf of a man who will neither know nor care anything about the sacrifice we make. He has no claim upon *me*, Ella.”

“Ah, brother, would you fail me?”

“What is this man to you or me? Nothing! And—”

“Oh, Alfred!—Proctor nothing to *me*, when he compels these tears—when, to mention his name only, makes my heart tremble with a mixed feeling of fear and joy! Oh, my brother, you are greatly changed, I fear!”

She threw herself upon the youth’s bosom as she spoke these words of melancholy reproach; and his eyes filled with sympathetic drops as he heard her sobbing upon his shoulder.

“Alas! Ella!” he exclaimed. “You speak as if I had any power to serve or to save. You deceive yourself, but must not deceive me. I know my own feebleness. I can do nothing for you. I see not how we can serve Proctor.”

“Oh, I will show you how!” she answered eagerly: “A just and good man need have no fear of open enmity. It is the arts that are practised in secret that find him accessible to harm. You shall show me how these spiders work, and where they set their snares, and leave the rest to me.”

“Yes; but, Ella, you are not to betray any of my secrets. That would be dishonoring, as well as endangering me, Ella; and I much doubt if it would be of any service to the person you seek to serve. But I will help you where I can with propriety. If I can show you in what way you may avert the danger from him without—”

“Oh, yes! That is all that I ask, dear Alfred! That is all!”

The poor fellow little suspected to what extent the fond and erring heart of his sister had already committed both. He little knew that her secret agency—which might very naturally conduct to his—was already something more than suspected by the wily Vaughan.

CHAPTER XXII.

LOVE PLAYS THE SPY.

It was probably a week after this conversation, when, one night, Alfred Monckton returned home to his mother's dwelling at an early hour of the evening, and with a roll of papers beneath his arm. He was all hustle and weariness.

"Come with me, Ella, into the library," he exclaimed to his sister. "I have more work for you than ever."

Seated in the library, at the ample table which was usually assigned to his nightly toils as the secretary of the commandant — where, in fact, his labors as an amannensis usually employed him, and, occasionally his sister, until midnight — he proceeded to unfold an enormous budget of rough notes and letters, to be copied and arranged. In these labors, Ella Monckton shared with a generous impulse which sought to lessen the burden of her brother's duties. She now lent herself readily to his assistance, and proceeded to ascertain the extent of the performance which he required.

"These are all to be copied and got in readiness by the morning, Ella, and I am so wearied."

"Let me have them, Alfred; show me what I am to do, while you throw yourself upon the sofa and rest yourself."

"There, that's a good creature. Copy me that, and that, and that. You see all's numbered; letter them thus, A, B, C, and so on, just as you find them on the scraps; only copy them on these sheets. Here's the paper; and the sooner you set to work the better. I will come to your help as soon as I have fairly rested. If I could sleep ten minutes only."

“You shall. Give me the papers, and let me go to work.”

And she began to gather up, and to unfold, and arrange the several manuscripts.

“Stay! Not these, Ella. And, by the way, you are not to see these, though they would interest you much. They concern Proctor.”

“Ah!”

“Yes; they are notes for his trial. There is to be a court of inquiry, and these are memoranda of the charges to be made against him, with notes of the evidence upon which they rest.”

“And why am I not to see these, Alfred?”

“Because I am positively forbidden to suffer them to be seen, Ella. Balfour seems a little suspicious, I think. He was most particular in his injunctions. The fact is, Ella, the allegations are very serious and the proofs are strong. If the witnesses be of the proper sort, they will convict and cashier Proctor. The worst is, that they will take him by surprise; for, as it is to be a court of inquiry only, no specifications will be submitted, and he will scarcely anticipate these charges if he be innocent of them. There, I can't show them to you, so don't ask me.”

“But, Alfred, will you really suffer me to do nothing—will you do nothing yourself—for the safety of a person against whom there is such a conspiracy?”

“What can I do? What should I do? I have no right to anything which shall involve a breach of trust. You would be the last person, Ella, to expect it.”

The poor girl sighed deeply and looked wistfully upon the mass of papers which he detached from the others, folded up, and put away in his escritoir. But she forbore all further entreaty, and, with a good grace and a cheerful manner, proceeded to the work assigned her.

“And news for you too, Ella,” said the young man, now looking up from the sofa upon which he had just flung himself. “Proctor is in town. He came down yesterday, and was this morning to see Balfour. But he refused to be seen—was too busy. Such was his answer; though I knew he was only busy with his tailor, whom he frequently consults—perhaps quite as frequently as any other person. Proctor waited in my apart-

ment. I am truly sorry for him. He is a fine manly-looking fellow, and wore so sad, yet so noble a countenance."

Another sigh from Ella—but she said nothing in reply; and, in a few moments, Alfred was asleep, fairly overcome by the toils of the day and the preceding night. She, meanwhile, urged her pen with a rapid industry, which seemed resolute, by devotion to the task immediately before her, to forget the exciting and sorrowful thoughts which were struggling in her mind. When her brother awoke, her task was nearly ended. But his remained to be performed; and, with assiduity that never shrunk from labor, she continued to assist in his. It was nearly midnight when they ceased.

"We have done enough, Ella, for the night, and your eyes look heavy with sleep. You are a dear girl, my sister, and I love you as brother never loved sister before. Do you not believe me? There, one kiss, and you must to bed. To-morrow night shall be a holiday for you. I mustn't receive assistance in that business of Proctor's, and that's for to-morrow. Good night, Ella; good night!"

They separated, and took their way to their respective chambers. When Ella Monckton reached hers, she threw herself into a chair, and clasped her hands in her lap with the air of one struggling with a great necessity and against a strenuous desire.

"I must see those papers!" she muttered, in low accents, to herself. "They may be of the last importance in *his* case. I can not suffer him to be crushed by these base and cruel enemies. Shall I have the means to save him from a great injustice—from a wrong which may destroy him—yet forbear to use them? There is no morality in this! If I read these papers without Alfred's privity, in what is he to blame? He betrays no confidence; he violates no trust; he surrenders no secret. I can not sleep with this conviction. I must see these papers!"

Where was the heaviness that weighed down these eyelids when her brother looked tenderly into her face at parting? He was mistaken when he ascribed their expression to the need for sleep. They were now intensely bright, and glittering with the earnestness of an excited will which has already settled upon

its object. Her meditations were long continued, and, occasionally, broke out into soliloquy. Her mind was in conflict, though her will was resolute and fixed. But, with such a will, and goaded by the passionate sympathies of a woman's heart in behalf of the being whom it most loves, we can hardly doubt as to her final conclusion.

She arose, and left her chamber with the lightest footstep in the world; traversed the passage which divided her brother's chamber from her own, and listened at the entrance. All was still within, and his light was extinguished. She returned to her chamber with a tread as cautious as before; possessed herself of the lighted candle, and rapidly descended once more to the library. The escritoir was locked, but the key, she well knew, occupied the corner of a shelf in the library. Here she sought and found it. She paused when about to apply it to the lock, but recovered her resolution with the reflection, which she was scarcely conscious that she spoke aloud—

“It can't hurt Alfred; *he* violates no trust;—and I may save the innocent man from the snares of the guilty.”

The moral philosophy of this speech was not quite satisfactory to the speaker herself. A moment after, and when the escritoir was laid open before her, and before her hands were yet spread forth to seize the papers, she clasped her palms together suddenly, exclaiming—

“Oh! Proctor, could you but know how much is the sacrifice I make for you!”

She sat down, covered her eyes with her hands, and the bright drops stole down between her fingers.

She did not long remain in this attitude. The night was going rapidly. She knew not the extent of the labor before her, but she felt that what was to be done should be done quickly. She unfolded the papers, which were numerous, consisting of letters, memoranda, and affidavits; and read with a nervous eagerness. Her heart beat more loudly as she proceeded. Her cheeks flushed, her eyes filled again with tears, as she possessed herself of the contents. The object of the papers was to show that the attachment of Proctor to the beautiful daughter of the rebel Walton had led to the escape of the lat

ter ; that the former had frequently neglected his duties ; had been a frequent visiter at " The Oaks," and had studiously forbore to see those signs of treason and conspiracy which he had been particularly set to watch.

It does not need that we should detail all the facts, as set forth in these documents against him. The nature of the charges we may conjecture from what is already known. The important matter in the papers was the sort of evidence, and the names of the persons, relied on to establish the accusation. The quick intelligence of Ella Monckton enabled her, almost at a glance, to see how much of this testimony it was important for Proctor to know, and to conceive how small a portion of it was possibly open to his conjecture. She shuddered as she reviewed the plausible array of circumstances by which he was enmeshed ; and, while her heart shrank from those particulars which showed the extremity of his passion for Katharine Walton, her mind equally revolted at the depth, breadth, and atrocity of the art, by which he was to be convicted as a criminal.

With a quick and vigilant thought, she determined to afford the victim an opportunity to encounter the enemy ; who was evidently resolved upon surprising him by an ambush. She resolved to make a *catalogue raisonnée* of the charges, the specifications, and the evidence under them. Love lent her new strength for the task ; and she who had sat up till midnight copying for her brother now occupied the rest of the night in abridging the documents which threatened the safety of the one whom she so unprofitably loved.

The gray dawn was already peeping through the shutters of her chamber window, when she was preparing to retire. She had completed her task. Excluding all unimportant matter— all unnecessary preliminaries—she had made out a complete report of the case as it was to be prosecuted before the court of inquiry. She had copied so much of the testimony as was needful to cover the points made ; dismissing all surplusage, and confining herself to the absolute evidence alone ; and completed the narrative by a full list of all the witnesses who were relied on to establish the charges against the victim. With this evi-

dence in his possession, and with ample time allowed him, it was in Proctor's power, if really innocent, to meet his enemies on their own ground; to encounter their witnesses with others, and rebut their allegations with all the proofs necessary to explain what was equivocal in the history of his unfortunate command at Dorchester. To cover the papers which she had copied out, in a brief note, and under a disguised hand to Proctor, was the completion of her task; and this done, and the packet sealed, poor Ella, doubtful of the propriety of what she had done, yet the slave of a necessity that found its authority in her best affections, retired to her pillow, with eyes too full of tears to suffer them to be quickly sealed by sleep.

The very next day, Proctor was in possession of the package from his unknown but friendly correspondent, and saw, with mingled feelings of consternation and relief, how large a body of evidence had been conjured up against him, and with how much subtlety and art. Yet, with the game of his enemies revealed to him, he also felt how comparatively easy it would be to defeat their machinations. But let us not anticipate.

It was with some surprise, the next evening, that Alfred Monckton heard his sister propose to her mother to accompany her on a visit to Katharine Walton. He looked up, at the moment, and caught her eyes, but said nothing. But, an hour after, when Mrs. Monckton had retired, Ella herself volunteered an explanation of the motives which had occasioned the change in her resolutions.

“If Colonel Balfour has set his heart upon this lady's being received into society, Alfred, it is particularly incumbent upon us to do what we can to please him. This will be the policy of most persons of the loyalist party in the city, and my refusal, or forbearance, to adopt the same policy would only subject me to suspicions. That my mother should go to see her, and not I, would certainly be suspicious.”

She paused, and her brother met her glance with an equivocal smile. Her cheeks flushed, and then, with sudden energy of manner, she continued—

“And, the truth is, Alfred, I *must* see her. I shall never

sleep until I do. I will nerve myself for the encounter with my best strength, and endure the meeting with all the courage and philosophy I can master. The enemy is never more formidable than when at a distance ; and—and—I am not without hope that, when I see Miss Walton near, I shall find in her such qualifications of her beauty as will serve to excuse a lover for becoming cold in his devotions, particularly if—if—he has no longer reason to indulge in hope.”

“Never hope it, Ella. Opinion seems to be too universally agreed on this subject. But I am glad that you have thus determined. The sooner we can reconcile ourselves to a painful subject, which we are nevertheless compelled to encounter, the better for our happiness. You will have to meet her, soon or late, for several balls in her honor are in preparation. Colonel Cruden has already resolved on making the Pinckney House a sort of Palace of Pleasure, and as their ward of the crown, Miss Walton is to be the queen thereof. He will be followed, as a matter of course, by the fashionable widow, Mrs. Cornelia Rivington, and she by a dozen others, all emulous, on a small scale, of working after her patterns. But I must to my task. These papers will keep me more than half the night. How I wish, Ella, that I could let you see them, but I dare not. Ah ! if poor Proctor only had these papers !”

And the young man proceeded to his solitary labors. His sister dared not look up and meet his glance, while he spoke so innocently of the secrets in his possession. She blushed at the consciousness of the theft of them, which she had committed ; her conscience not quite satisfied that, even with the most virtuous motive in the world, she was quite right in doing wrong.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FASHIONABLE SOCIETY IN GARRISON.

It was eleven in the morning, by the massive mahogany clock that stood in the great entrance to the spacious dwelling at the foot of Broad street, which was occupied by the fashionable Mrs. Rivington. This lady was the widow of a wealthy planter, one of the king's former counsellors for the province, and, for a goodly term of years, the holder of an office of dignity and profit under that best tenure, *durante bene placito*, in a monarchy. The worthy widow, as in duty bound, shared in the unselfish devotion to the crown by which her lord and master was distinguished. She was naturally true to an old school in which, not only had all her lessons, but all her fortunes, been acquired. She was now, accordingly, a fiery loyalist, and the leader of *ton* with all that class in the good city of Charleston who professed similar ways of thinking. She cut most others with little hesitation. She turned her back, with a most sovereign sense of supremacy, upon the Gadsdens and the Rutledges—upon all those, in other words, whom she could not subject to her authority. Resistance to her sway was fatal to the offender. A doubt of her supremacy was a mortal injury to be avenged at every hazard. She aimed at such a tyranny in society—though just as little prepared to avow her policy—as the king of Great Britain was desirous to assert in government; and, for the brief period of time in which the British troops were in sole command of the city, she exercised it successfully. She was an important acquisition to the garrison. She had wealth, and the temper to employ it—was witty if not wise, and her suppers were unexceptionable. Fair, but not fat, nor much beyond the toler-

ated border line in widowhood, of forty, Mrs. Cornelia Rivington had as many admirers, of a certain sort, as any of the more legitimate *belles* within the limits of the garrison. Stout, red-faced majors of foot, who had impaired their lives in the free use of curry and Jamaica, who enjoyed the good things of this life without much regard to the cost, when the expense was borne by another—or to the evils, when the suffering only followed the feast and did not interfere with it—these were generally the most devoted admirers of the wealthy widow. They would have been pleased—a score of them—to persuade her out of her widowhood, at her earliest convenience; but, with all her infirmities of wealth and vanity—both of which prompt, quite commonly, to put one's self into the keeping of another—she had, up to the present moment, proved inaccessible to the pleadings and persuasions upon the perilous subject of a second matrimony. Her life, as a widow, was more cheering and grateful, *sub rosa*, than she had found it when a devoted wife, subject to a rule at home, which had acquired its best lessons from an arbitrary official exercise of authority abroad. In brief, Mrs. Rivington's present mode of life was an ample revenge for her sufferings in wifedom. She had no notion of going back to the old experiences, and, perhaps, was by no means satisfied with the special candidates among the garrison who had sought, with bended bodies and fair smirking visages, for the privilege of *keeping* the soft hand, the touch of which, in the ordinary civilities of society, they professed to find so wondrously provocative of the desire for eternal retention. The widow smiled graciously enough upon her *blasé* admirers; but her smiles led to no substantial results, and afforded but little encouragement. As Major Kirkwood sullenly exclaimed among his messmates, at Tylman's Club-House, on the Bay, near Tradd street—

“She's one of the few women I have ever met, who, with so much wealth, and not more than forty-five, had fairly cut her eye-tooth. She's not to be taken in by gammon. The fact is, boys, professions are of as little value in her eyes as in ours; and the whole game with her is one of a calculation too strict to suffer such nonsense as the affections to be taken into the

account at all. What do you think she said to me, when I suffered myself to say some foolish, flattering nonsense in her ears?"

"You proposed to her, Osborne!" cried one of his companions with a shout.

"Devil a bit! unless she construed a very common speech of the mess into a meaning which none of us think to give it."

"But which *you* as certainly meant, major."

"Out with it, Osborne, and confess, you proposed. Your gills tell the story."

They were certainly red enough.

"Not so, I tell you, unless you find an avowal in a common place."

"What was it? The words—the words!"

The demand was unanimous, and, with an increasing redness of face and throat, the hardy major of sepoy admitted that he had suffered himself to say to the widow that he should be the happiest man in the world to take her widowhood under the shadow of the Kirkwood name.

"What," he added, "has been said by all of us, a thousand times, to a thousand different women, and without attaching any real meaning to the speech."

"Ha! ha! ha! That won't do, major. The speech is innocent enough, I grant you, at a frolic in the midst of supper, or while whirling through the ball-room. But time and place alter the thing very materially. Now, did you not say these innocent words in a morning call, and did you not entreat the meeting beforehand? The widow Rivington is not the woman to mistake a soldier's gallantry for a formal proposition. No, no! The whole truth, old boy. Confess! confess!"

"You push me quite too hard, Major Stock—quite too hard. I wonder where your accounts would stand, if you were scored in the same manner against the wall. But I frankly admit that in the course of a morning call that Mrs. Rivington construed my complimentary commonplace into a proposal."

"You die hard, Kirkwood," replied Stock. "But I have a reason for putting you to the torture, since, to anticipate detection, I am disposed to go to the confessional myself. The truth is, boys, I got an inkling of what Kirkwood intended. I had

not watched his play at the trout for nothing. It was at Vaux hall that I overheard him arrange to see her at her house the next day. The hour and all was appointed, and a glance at the widow's eyes, at the moment, showed me that Kirk was a candidate for the 'back door out.' Half an hour after, I walked with her ladyship myself. I, too, had set my heart upon this same comely fish"—

"What, you, major?" was the query from several voices.

"You've been on the sly, then?"

"I confess it, boys, in the bitterness of my heart, and with a sore conscience; happy, however, that I am able to lay my hand on another's shoulder and say, as the blind man said to the ass, 'there's a pair of us, brother!'"

"Well, what next?" demanded Kirkwood himself, somewhat impatiently.

"I'll make the story short for your accommodation. You arranged to call upon the widow at twelve. I entreated the privilege of seeing her just one hour later."

"The devil you did!"

"Yes, i'faith; and I will venture a trifle that our answers were both in the same language."

"Yes, perhaps, if the questions were alike," growled Kirkwood.

"Oh, mine was a regimental commonplace, pretty much as yours. In plain terms, I did as you did, offered myself, hand heart, and fortune—*pour passer le temps*—only, I assure you."

"And her answer?" quoth Kirkwood.

"What was yours?" demanded Stock.

"I'd as lief tell it as not. It was a sly answer, such as she would have made believing me to be in earnest."

"Or not believing it. But let's have it."

"'Major Kirkwood,' said she, 'I've seen too many people fresh from the blarney-stone, to allow me not to understand you. It will be your fault if you do not understand me. Of course, major, you mean nothing of what you say. If I could think that you did, I should think as little of your understanding as I should then believe you thought of mine. But, hereafter, even

in jest, do not let me hear you speak such nonsense. We are both too old to suffer from any innocent credulity.'"

"Ha! ha! ha! Ho! ho! ho! Hurrah for the widow Rivington for ever! And your answer, Stock?"

"The same in substance, though not in words, but just as full of deviltry."

"Ha! ha! ha! What a widow! She'd kill off the regiment in short order."

"Well for us that precious few cut their eye-teeth so precociously," responded the good-humored Stock. "But you look sulky, Kirkwood. Don't harbor malice, my boy. The widow's suppers are as admirable as ever, and she smiles as sweetly as if she had never flung the blarney-stone in the face of either."

"Did she tell you of my visit?" growled Kirkwood, in painful inquiry.

"Not a syllable. I conjectured her answer to you from that which she made to me. Believing myself to be the handsomer, the younger, and the better man, and knowing her to be a woman of admirable taste, I naturally felt sure that you could not stand where I had fallen."

"Out upon you for a vain puppy!" cried Kirkwood, as the merriment of his comrades rang in his ears.

The laugh was against him, and he felt that any further show of soreness would only exaggerate his annoyances. With an effort, he succeeded in recovering his strength and composure of face, and the two baffled candidates, a few moments later, were agreed to call upon the heedless widow, availing themselves of a new privilege which she had just accorded to the fashionable world, by which an ante-meridian visitation would escape misconstruction.

Mrs. Rivington had just adopted a round of "mornings." Her rooms were thrown open at *eleven*, to remain open till *one*. Here she held *levées* for conversation wholly. The device was new—perhaps designed to legitimate such visits as those which Kirkwood and Stock had paid her. At all events, she made the visits unexceptionable, and found security in numbers. In a crowd she could escape the dangers of a *tête-a-tête* with *blasi majors* of foot, each fresh from kissing the stone of blarney.

The old mahogany clock that stood, "like a tower," in the great passage of the stately mansion of Mrs. Rivington, at the foot of Broad street, was, as we have said before, on the stroke of eleven, when the doors were thrown wide for the reception of company. And very soon they came. Mrs. Rivington was not the person to be neglected by the Charleston fashionables at that period, when the objection to the equivocal in place and birth was not so tenaciously urged as in modern times. The indulgent requisitions of that day insisted rather upon externals than the substance. In brief, wit and mirth, and good clothing, and manners *selons les règles*, satisfied the utmost demands of the nice and scrupulous, and nobody needed to boast of his grandmother to find his proper *status* on the floor. There were bores in those days as in ours, and strange to say, some of the most unexceptionable in point of quality and family belonged to this description. But worlds and cities are oddly made up; and he who would be tolerant in building up humanity must not show himself hostile to any sort of blocks. Mrs. Rivington knew just as well as anybody else of what miscellaneous stuff society is made. She was indulgent in proportion to her experience.

"La, you there?" she said to Penfield, who wrote gent. after his name, and had once been a lawyer in hope to be attorney-general of the province. He had turned up his aristocratic nose at some of the *oi poloi* of the saloon.

"La, you there, counsellor, and be merciful to yourself if not to me. Were we to admit the quality only, we should die of atrophy, or commit suicide, or some other less-dignified sin; and were we not to suffer the *canaille*, our gentry would lack the only provocation that makes them endurable. You, for example, have scarcely had a word to say since your entrance, till you saw that long line of Smiths make their appearance, and since that moment your words and features have both been positively sublime. Shall I make the Smiths known to you? They are really very clever people—good company enough for the summer."

"I thank you. But how is the name spelled? With an *or y*?"

“What difference does that make?” inquired Mrs. Rivington.

“All the difference in the world, madam. The Smythes and not the Smiths are to be known in society. It is the former only which you will find among the noble families of England. Indeed, the Smiths have all snub noses, which, as my venerable grandmother always assured me, is a sign of low birth and doubtful origin. Excuse me; but as they are crossing here, I’d rather find my way to the opposite end of the room. These steel mirrors of yours exhibit the outline admirably. They are just at the proper hang. Ah, my dear Mrs. Rivington, could we only choose properly our guests!”

And, with a sigh, Penfield, *gent.*, crossed the apartment, while the Smiths, five in number, male and female, with a warm impulse, that betrayed freshness and exuberance, not the less grateful because vulgar, came forward almost at a bound, to acknowledge the presence of their hostess.

“You came but a moment too late, girls,” said the widow. “I should otherwise have brought to your acquaintance the famous counsellor, Penfield, a man of talents, and connected with the oldest families of the country.”

“Pooh! pooh! no such thing, my dear Mrs. Rivington,” cried Mrs. Jeremiah Smith, the mother of the flock. “You never made a greater mistake in your life. Old Penfield, the grandfather of this young fellow, was a good man enough, and quite honest, I believe. He was a first-rate silversmith; and all of our plate—no great deal, I allow—bears his stamp and brand. My father used to say, in his praise, that you could rely upon his putting into his spoons all the old silver that you gave him. As for this youngster”—so she called a person of thirty-five—“he was spoiled by Sir Egerton Leigh, who, finding that he wrote a good hand, took him as his secretary, and afterward made something of a lawyer of him. And *that’s* the true history. But I’ll have a talk with him, and set him right in his genealogy.”

“Do so, my dear Mrs. Smith, and you will be doing him a service. I really believe, if Mr. Penfield could learn the facts from a proper authority, it would be the making of him.”

“Would he like it, think you, Mrs. Rivington?” whispered

the old lady, now, for the first time, having some doubts on the subject.

“Oh, surely, my dear madam; he is the most grateful being in the world to any person who will prove, unquestionably, the antiquity of his family.”

And the mischievous widow turned away to the reception of other guests; but not losing sight of the Smiths, whom she saw in a drove, following in the wake of the mother as she waddled across the room, in full chase of Penfield, the gentleman.

The rooms were, by this time, filled with various groups of both sexes, civil and military. The British officers loomed out conspicuously in their scarlet, while, here and there, might be seen a loyalist captain or colonel, in the more modest green or blue of his own command. These persons were not prominent nor particularly popular, and it might be seen that they were not often sought out by the officers of the regular service. The ladies seemed inclined to give them the cold shoulder also, though this might be owing entirely to the fact that none of them had particularly distinguished himself by his services in the ranks of his majesty.

General Williamson, who made his appearance at this time, was rather more in favor. But he was a *general*, and something still was expected at his hands. It was the policy of the British officers to encourage this opinion, and to treat him accordingly. But even *his* star was on the wane. He felt it so, and rated the courtesies he received at their true value. He was not the person to figure in a saloon, and his appearance now was quite as much to prevent his absence being remarked, as to compel remark by his presence. Besides, Mrs. Rivington's reunions were of a sort to provide the *on dit* of the garrison, and note equally opinions and events. Williamson was too deeply involved in politics to find the scene an attractive one, and he lingered but a little while after showing himself to the hostess.

It was while he conversed with her, however, that the saloon was thrown into quite a buzz of excitement by the *entrée* of the famous belles, *par excellence*, the Harveys—the graces, as they were gallantly styled by the gallant Harry Barry. They were certainly beautiful girls; but the beauty, beyond comparison,

of the three was Mary, the younger, lovingly and not irreverently called Moll Harvey. Beside her, all the other stars grew pale. Mary Roupell rapidly made her way to other groups in an opposite direction; the lively Phelps, more dignifiedly, followed this example; and other smaller lustres, fearing, in like manner, that their lesser fires would be entirely extinguished, left an open path for the advancing beauties to the presence of the hostess.

It will be enough if we confine our description of the beauty, on this occasion, to the one being whose possession of it was thus conclusively recognised by the spontaneous fears of every rival. Moll Harvey was of middle size and most symmetrical figure. Ease and grace were natural to her as life itself; but her motion was not that simply of grace and ease. There was a free, joyous impulse in her movements, an exquisite elasticity, which displayed itself in a thousand caprices of gesture, and seemed to carry her forward buoyantly as a thing possessing the infinite support and treasure of the air. As song to ordinary speech, such was the relation which her action bore to the common movements of her sex. A fairy property in her nature seemed to bring with her the spring and all its flowers where she came; and the loveliness which appeared to ray out from her person, as she walked or danced, compelled the involuntary homage of the eye, making the thought forgetful of all search or inquiry except through that single medium.

It was the day for buckram figures and starched pyramidal structures upon the head, reminding you of the towering temples of the goddess Cybele. But Moll Harvey had quite too excellent a native taste to sacrifice her genuine beauties to these monstrous excesses of fashion. A wood-nymph could not have attired herself much more loosely. She would have served admirably as the model for Moore's Norah Creina. A free, flowing skirt, the cincture by no means too closely drawn, sufficing to show that her figure needed no making. A silken eymar encircled, but did not enclose the bust, which, it must be confessed, was much more freely displayed than altogether suits the taste of the present times—so white, so full and exquisitely rounded.

Symmetry was the exquisite characteristic in the beauty of Moll Harvey. The white pillar of the neck, the skin softer and purer than ivory, delicately warmed by health and a generous blood, rose from the bust with a graceful motion that carried its expression also, and seemed endowed with utterance of its own. Nor was the head wanting to, nor the face unworthy of, the rest of our fair picture. A perfect oval, the brows rising up nobly and showing a goodly mass above the eyes; the eyes arched fairly, with brows of jetty black, not thick and weighty, yet impressive; the lashes long, the orbs full, but not obtrusive, lightening now, and now drooping, as with a weight of tenderness, changing with the rapidity of light in correspondence with emotions which were for ever quickening in her wild, warm heart; the nose and mouth both Grecian, of the most perfect cut and finish; and the chin sweetly rounded, to perfect the whole. When, over the white, full shoulders, you have thrown the happily disordered tresses, and when, upon the forehead, you mark the nice dexterity which has grouped the frequent locks in the most sweet and playful relationship, ready, like the silken streamers of the corn, to hold converse with every passing zephyr, you see the outline of look, face, form, feature, but lack still that inspiring presence, the life, the soul, which, like the aroma to the flower, proves the possession of a secret something to which these are but as the chalices that contain the essential spirit. See the life that lightens up the features into love, and gives a motion as of the first flights of a wanton bird, and you forget the external form in the real beauty of soul, and fancy, and feminine impulse, that animates it from within. Ah! too sadly left untutored, that wild and froward heart, that passionate impulse, that delirious glow of feeling, which now but too frequently usurp the sway and overwhelm the affections—never so happy as when subdued and patient—with fierce passions, that appeal ever to the last sad tyranny of self.

The beauties of Moll Harvey naturally provoked reflections in respect to her future fortunes. The crowd which gathered about her, and the few that retreated from her side, were all equally familiar with her career. They had censures, free enough, in regard to her intimacy with Prince William, then a

lieutenant in the British navy. They knew how devoted had been the attentions of Balfour, and how undisguised was his homage; yet they well knew that he had kept himself from any absolute committals; and, knowing the humble character of her fortunes, and the selfish character of his ambition—his equal greed of wealth and power—they never doubted that the flirtation between the parties would never assume a more serious aspect, or, if it did, an aspect quite too serious to be grateful to the fame and future of the fairer and the weaker party. As the beauty swept by with her train, the whole subject was very freely discussed by all that class “who but live by others’ pain.” Our excellent Mrs. Smith, still followed by the clan of Smith, was the first to open the survey.

“Her nose is out of joint now, I reckon. This Miss Walton is not only as handsome as she—every bit—but she’s a fortune besides, and everybody knows how much that makes in the scale in showing where beauty lies. After all, the commandant knows—no one better—that it isn’t what beauty *shows*, but what it can do—what it can buy or what it can bring—that it is most valued and valuable. Yes, you may put it down as certain, that Moll’s nose is for ever out of joint in that quarter.”

Good Mrs. Smith had not seen—perhaps had not cared to see—that, while she was making this most consolatory speech, the subject of it was passing directly behind her, and must have heard every syllable. The eye of Moll Harvey flashed, her lips curled with pride, and her brow darkened, and she inly resolved, from that moment, that she would allow no longer the trifling of her lover. She would no longer permit his enjoyment of the *prestige* belonging to such a conquest as herself, without paying the proper price for it. *He* should submit to wear those bonds which the world assumed him to possess the power to place on *her* hands at any moment. She disdained to listen to the farther conversation among the Smiths and their companions, but swept out of hearing as rapidly as was consistent with her pride and dignity. Her absence caused no cessation of the fire.

“As for Miss Walton comparing with our Moll in beauty, that’s all a mistake,” said Miss Calvert, a spinster who had

become an antique without arriving at the condition of a gem "I've seen this Walton. She's quite too large for beauty—her features are all big; it is true they are somewhat expressive; but no more to compare with Harvey's than mine with Juno's."

"You've certainly gone to sufficient extremes for a comparison, my dear Miss Calvert," put in Major Barry, who at this moment joined the group, followed by his eternal shadow, Captain M'Mahon. Barry bowed and smiled the compliment, which his words did not convey. Miss Calvert's ears were thus taught to deceive her. She smiled in turn, and immediately responded to the dextrous little wit—the wit, *par excellence*, of the British garrison.

"Now, don't you agree with me, Harry Barry?"

"There is, perhaps, but a single respect in which we should not agree, Miss Calvert."

"And, pray, what is the exception?" demanded the lady, with some little pique of manner.

"Nay, nay," he answered slyly, "that confession must be reserved for a less public occasion. You were speaking of Miss Walton's beauty, and that of our Harvey. You are quite right about the former. She is large, but perhaps not too large for her particular style. She is evidently a fine woman—a magnificent woman, indeed—and, if to be styled a beauty, we may style her an angel of a beauty; but Moll Harvey is a love of a beauty, and is so much the more to my liking."

"I knew we should agree," said Miss Calvert, triumphantly, and flattered, she knew not well why.

"Ah!" put in Captain M'Mahon, "Miss Walton is certainly a fine woman, a real lady, and a beauty too. My friend Barry and myself called upon her yesterday, and, after a close discussion, we fully concurred in respect to her points."

"Egad, M'Mahon," cried Major Stock, "you speak of the lady as if you had trotted her out and scrutinized her with the eye of a jockey."

"What! does M'Mahon's pun escape you?" cried Kirkwood. "Do you forget that *points* is his word for *counters*. His image was taken from the whist table, not from the stables. He was

thinking of the lady's *cash* when he discussed her *charms*. His idea of beauty—like that of most of us poor soldiers of fortune—must be built upon positive resources, such as tell just as seriously in a private bureau as in an army chest.”

“I' faith, my friend M'Mahon is no more prepared to deny the soft impeachment than myself. The fact is, a mere beauty, however beautiful, is quite beyond the means of any of us. For myself, I confess to a preference for Moll Harvey, *per se*; the beauty of the Walton is quite too stately, too commanding for me. It half awes and overpowers me. Still, the *argumentum ad crumenam* tells wonderfully in her behalf.”

“Ah, my friend Major Barry always discriminates the point most admirably. You must let me repeat his impromptu, made this morning as we left the hairdresser's on this very subject.”

“Nay, now, M'Mahon, my dear fellow, honor bright!” and the deft and tidy little major affected to be horror-stricken at the threatened exposure, while his little eyes twinkled with his anticipated triumph.

“Oh, but I must repeat, Barry.”

“To be sure; repeat by all means.—Come, Barry, this affectation of modesty won't do. You have not a single article in all your wardrobe that sits so badly upon you.”

“What! you out upon me also, Stock?”

“I would save you from yourself, my boy, and from your own vanities, which will surely be your death the moment they assume the show of modesty. We have recognised you, by common consent, the wit and poet of the garrison. You have flung a thousand shafts of satire at the poor rebels and the rebel ladies: and we have applauded to the echo. Shall we be denied our proper aliment now? No! no! Ah, my dear Mrs. Rivington, you are here in season. Barry has been doing a smart thing, as usual.”

“In verse, of course. Are we to hear it?”

“Are we to be denied?—particularly when we are told that it relates to the rival beauties, the Harvey and the Walton?”

“How can you compare them, major?”

‘I do not. I contrast them only. It is Barry's comparison

that you are called to hear. His friend M'Mahon answers for it, and he is sufficient authority. We must have it."

"Certainly we must! Captain M'Mahon reads verses like an angel, I know; and, as *his friend* wrote them, he will be sure to read them, with the best affect."

"There's no resisting that, M'Mahon. Come, clear your throat and begin. You are as long in getting ready as was the inspired beast that waited for the blows of Balaam."

"What beast was that, Major Stock?" was M'Mahon's innocent inquiry.

"Oh, one whose voice was that of an angel, so that the comparison need not give you any shock. Come, the ladies wait. Positively, Mrs. Rivington, I never saw so much anxiety in any countenance as in yours. How any gentleman should tantalize a lady's curiosity to such a degree is astonishing!"

"If my friend, Major Barry, will only consent," said M'Mahon.

"I won't stay to listen, M'Mahon," cried Barry, trotting out of the circle, but immediately passing to its rear, where his short person might remain unsuspected; his ears, meanwhile, drinking in the precious streams of his own inspiration.

Thus permitted, as it were, M'Mahon, the centre of a group which had so greatly increased, placed himself in a stiff, school-boy attitude, and, thrice hemming, extended his hand and arm, in a preparatory gesture, as if about to drag the pleiades from their place of shining. The painful parturition of his lips followed, and the mouse-like monster of an epigram came forth, head and tail complete; and this its substance.

M'Mahon recites —

"When bounteous Fate decreed our Harvey's birth,
We felt that heaven might yet be found on earth;
But when the Walton to our eyes was given,
We knew that man might yet be raised to heaven.
Indulgent Fates, one blessing more bestow —
Give me with Harvey long to dwell below;
And when, and last, ye summon me above,
Then let the Walton be my heavenly love!"

"Bravo! bravo! Harry Barry for ever, and his friend M'Mahon!" cried Major Stock, and the circle echoed the applause.

“And he did it. my friend Barry,” said M'Mahon, with the sweetest simplicity of manner—“he did it in the twinkling of an eye, just as we left the hairdresser's. I was determined that it shouldn't be lost, and went back and wrote it down.”

“You deserve the gratitude of posterity, Captain M'Mahon, and our thanks in particular,” said the fair hostess, in the sweetest accents, and with a smile that did not wholly conceal the sarcasm in her thought.

“What,” continued M'Mahon in his narrative, “could have put the idea into my friend Barry's head, at such a moment, I can not conjecture. It was as much like inspiration as anything I ever heard of.”

“What put it into his head? Why the oil, the powder, the pomatum, and that picture of the Venus Aphrodite, rising in saffron from a sea of verdigris, which hangs up in the shop. Here's inspiration enough for a wit and poet at any time.”

“Ah!” interposed Barry, now slyly pressing through the group, “I am always sure of a wet blanket at your hands, Stock.”

“What! you there! And you have heard every syllable! Well, all I have to say, Barry, is this, that your modesty can stand anything in the way of applause, and take it all for gospel.”

What further might have been said on this fruitful subject, must be left to conjecture; for, just at this moment, a smartly-dressed officer, of thirty, in the costume of a major, with a wild, dashing air, and long disheveled locks over a florid face, and a dark blue flashing eye, penetrated the circle with a cry of—

“Break off! break off! No more of your fun now; put on your gravest faces and rehearse for tragedy. Here's the commandant coming, all storm and thunder. There's the devil to pay, and no pitch hot.”

“Why what's the matter now, mad Archy?” demanded Stock.

The new-comer was famous, after a fashion, in the circle. He was distinguished from a score of Campbells in the city, by the grateful *nom de guerre* of mad, or crazy Campbell. To the former epithet he submitted, rather pleased than otherwise at

the imputation. The latter was commonly used in regard to him when he had left the circle.

“Matter enough! Meadows and his train have been cut off by Marion’s men. Half of the escort cut to pieces, and the rest prisoners. The wagons all captured, with all the stores. Meadows himself is badly wounded, maimed, and disfigured for life—mouth and nose beaten into one by the butt of a rifle.”

“Shocking!” was the cry among the ladies. “Poor, poor Charley! what a fright he must be!”

“He seems to have felt it so; for so great was his fury that, even after the rebel who struck him was down—a monstrous fellow of twenty stone and upward—Charley’s fury never suffered him to stop hewing at the fellow till he had smitten off both of his ears close to the skull, giving him the puritan brand for life.”

Campbell’s narration, received through third hands, is as we see, something imperfect. We are already in possession of the facts.

“And Balfour?”

“He is even now coming in this direction, and in an awful fury. I pity all who vex him at this moment. It will need all the smiles of the fair Harvey”—bowing in the direction of the beauty, who had, by this time, joined the group—“and even these may not suffice, unless seconded by those of the fair Walton.”

At this open reference to her rival’s power, the imperious beauty bit her lips with vexation. Her eyes flashed with fires of scorn she did not seek to suppress, and she turned away from the circle as Balfour entered the apartment. But we need not linger for the tragedy. The farce is sufficient for our purpose.

CHAPTER XXIV.

REBEL LADIES OF CHARLESTON.

WE pass from scenes of frivolity to those of graver cares and objects. This is the true order of human events, and the transition is more natural from gay to grave than the reverse, as they have it at the theatre, and as the moral poet orders it. It is an extreme change from the lively and thoughtless mornings of Mrs. Rivington, to the gloomy evenings at Mrs. Singleton's—from the fashionable and frivolous seeker after motley, in talk and habit, to the serious questioner in the sad affairs of life and its necessities. The two ladies, it may be said, are both politicians; but of very different schools. Mrs. Rivington, the widow of a royal official, finds it pleasant to respect his memory by adhering to his faith, the more especially as his party is in the ascendant, and as she rejoices in the tributes of a brilliant circle in which loyalty commands all the voices. Her preferences will provoke no surprise among the great body of the people, since they represent a triumphant party and cause, and are themselves very agreeable social triumphs. Politics, in her circles, are not so much discussed as accepted; measures rarely command a single reflection, though our lady statesmen are as earnest in their declarations of fidelity to the reigning sovereign as ever were Madame Roland and her amiable associates, in respect to the abstract deities to which they offered their unavailing incense. At Mrs. Rivington's, you will hear as much said against rebellion as a provincial loyalism, ever solicitous to please, will always be found to say; but the politics of her circle were not calculated to afford much assistance to the councils of Balfour. Nevertheless, he greatly encouraged them.

They had their uses in influencing, through the medium of society, the moods of all those doubtful, capricious, and unprincipled, of whom, perhaps, the greater number of mankind are composed. The youthful of both sexes were always sure to find principles at Mrs. Rivington's suited to their own desires, if not to the necessities of the race and family.

The politics at Mrs. Singleton's were of a different sort. Balfour more than suspected that the old lady was engaged in labors that were forbidden; but he had been able to fasten upon her no specific cause of offence. Yet was she busy, with a restless interest, in the cause of liberty, that made her nights sleepless, and filled her aged head with vexing thoughts and subtlest combinations. Her house was a point of reunion with all those who, like herself, long for the overthrow of the existing *régime*; who yearn for the return of exiles, well-beloved sons of the soil, dear to their affections, precious to their hopes, the kinsmen of their blood. Hither came, almost nightly, those favoring the cause of the patriots, who, by reason of age, of sex, of feebleness, were suffered to remain within the city of the conqueror. What could these superannuated old men achieve or attempt, who might be seen at dusk, or after it, to enter the doors of the old-fashioned dwelling in Church street? How should British lords and generals, captains and men-at-arms, apprehend any thing from those ancient and well-bred ladies, or those fair and witty young ones, who showed themselves openly in this much-frequented domicile?

Yet among these were many rare women, such as would have given strength to the Girondins, and armed them more ably for the work of their own and their country's safety. Mrs. General Gadsden, whose stately pride defied the sneer of the witling Barry; the fierce, proud spirits of Mrs. Savage and Mrs. Parsons, whom the same wit described as tragedy queens, so noble was their spirit, and so well prepared for the extremest perils of humanity. The names of Edwards, Horry, and Ferguson, highly and equally endowed with grace and courage; of Pinckney and the Elliotts, names immemorially allied with dignity and patriotism; these were all to be found regular attendants at the "evenings" of Mrs. Singleton. And these evenings were not

given to pleasure, as were the mornings of the dashing widow Rivington. Grave studies occupied her guests; work was to be done under counsel of studious and far-seeing heads. Their words went forth from the city with significance to the remote interior, and were frequently followed by large results. They gathered and reported the signs of the times; they conveyed intelligence, sometimes money, and sometimes ammunition—shot and powder—to their brethren in arms. They devised schemes by which to relieve the city from its thralldom. In brief, the dwelling of which Katharine Walton had become an inmate, was the place of frequent assemblage for a very active and sleepless circle of conspirators.

Several of these were present with Mrs. Singleton and Katharine Walton, on the evening of the day distinguished by the opening of the fashionable “mornings” of Mrs. Rivington. From without, silence and darkness seemed to brood over the habitation; but there was an inner room, well lighted, around the centre table of which might be seen a group of heads which would have been held remarkable in any council or assembly. That of the venerable Mrs. Singleton was itself a study. Her thin, attenuated visage was elevated by a noble forehead, which the few stray gray hairs about her temples, and the sombre widow’s cap which she wore, rather tended to ennoble than disparage. Her keen, gray eye and closely-compressed lips denoted vigilance, courage, and circumspection. It had all the fires of youth, burning, seemingly, with as much vigor as ever—the heart of the volcano still active, though in the bosom of the iceberg.

Katharine sat beside her, a steady observer, and mostly a silent one, of the group and the subjects which it discussed. Old Tom Singleton, the wit and humorist, as well as patriot, stood up in the circle, hat in hand, preparing to depart. We shall speak of him more fully hereafter. Behind him stood a boy, sharp-featured and intelligent, of whom the parties spoke sometimes as George, and sometimes as Spidell, the lad being afterwards well known by the people of Charleston, by the two names combined, as a worthy and respected citizen. He carried on his arm a basket, which the ladies had been filling with tapes, laces, linens, and other small articles of dress, designed

for a peddling expedition. At the bottom of the basket, however, might have been found one or more packets, cleverly done up, and looking very innocently upon the outside, which a very quick-sighted royalist might have found to contain any quantity of treasonable matter.

The youth of the lad, and the seeming openness of his operations, however, were calculated to disarm suspicion. George Spidell, in fact, was under the active superintendence of Joshua Lockwood, one of the conspirators of the circle, employed constantly as a sort of supercargo in a large *periagua*, which was busily engaged in plying between the city and all the landings and inlets along shore to the Santee river. Stopping at certain well-known points, George was sent ashore with his basket in search of customers; But it was always understood that his visit was first to be paid to certain well-known dwellings. Here it was that the secret package at the bottom of his basket was invariably sought out and selected; and in this manner, Marion, and Horry, and Mahan, and others of the partisan captains, contrived to receive weekly information of the condition of affairs in the city. Lockwood, the principal in these expeditions, and little George, his subordinate, suffered some narrow escapes in these innocent expeditions. But these must not beguile us into further digression.

"Let us be off, Lockwood," said old Tom Singleton; "we shall have little time to spare. The tide will serve at daylight; and George must have some sleep before he starts."

"He needs it, and deserves it," said the hostess, kindly, looking at the boy. "But have you eaten heartily, my son?"

The boy glanced at the plate, still remaining on a side-table, which exhibited very few fragments, but enough perhaps for a sufficient answer to the question.

"Thank you, ma'am, yes," he answered; "and I have this, too," he added, showing a huge triangular mass of cake, which he had deposited within his basket. The party smiled.

"George is seldom *off his food*," said Lockwood, "pursuing such a pleasant life."

"And he has learned one of the best lessons," said old Tom Singleton; "that of making provisions for the morrow. the

'one great virtue which distinguishes the wise man from the fool. Let us practise a little upon this lesson ourselves. It is understood that nothing more remains to communicate to our friends. You were speaking, Doctor——'

Singleton paused, his glance fixing upon one of the gentlemen of the circle who had hitherto been silent. All eyes were turned upon this person with an expression of deference and esteem. This was the celebrated David Ramsay, one of the first historians of the country, and a physician of high distinction. He was then in the prime of manhood, and in the full vigor of his intellect. In person he was about five feet ten, healthy and somewhat athletic, but not stout. His countenance was by no means a handsome one, but it was not an unpleasing one. A blemish in one of his eyes, from small-pox, gave a slight obliquity to his gaze; but the entire character of the face was impressive and somewhat prepossessing. An earnest reflection and cool, intrepid judgment, were clearly shown in the speaking countenance and the eager and almost impetuous manner. His utterance was vehement and rapid, but always clear and intelligible. Thus addressed by Singleton, his answer was prompt.

"We were speaking of Williamson. What you hear is no doubt true. His situation is precisely as is described; and, doubtless, he never really intended to betray his country or himself. He was only too weak to be honest at a moment of great external pressure. He has shrewdness enough to see that his future situation is unpromising, and foresight enough to discover that Britain has exhausted her own resources, and must now really rely on ours, if she hopes to continue the war. But the partisan warfare has put an end to this hope with all persons of sagacity. The partisans must increase in number daily, and their frequent small successes will more than avail in keeping up the popular courage against the occasional large victories of the British regulars. Now I take for granted, from all I know of the man, that this prospect has been fully presented to his eyes. It will become more and more evident with every day. But is this a reason that we should trust him with ourselves or with our secrets, particularly as he has not yet so far committed himself to us as to give us any proper hold upon him? I sup-

pose that Colonel Singleton is in possession of a certain amount of proof—that Williamson has, in fact, given pledges of returning fidelity; but of the character of this proof and these pledges we know nothing; and they may be such as an adroit person might readily explain away. I am of opinion that we should, at present, make no use of this information. We should watch him, and when he can clearly serve us in any important matter, it will then be time enough to let him understand that we are in the same vessel with himself; but, with my consent, not a syllable before.”

“You are right, doctor. Once a traitor, always a traitor. He may be useful—*would* be useful, if he could be true; if treacherous, he might sink our vessel in the moment when the gale was most prosperous, and when we are most richly freighted. Let Robert Singleton manage the matter with him wholly; he has coolness and sagacity enough for any purpose; and there seems to be no reason that we should mix in this business; at all events, not for the present. I confess that, to have any communion with Williamson at all, suggests to me the idea of that unhappy conference—the first on record—which our excellent, but too accessible grandmother had in Eden with the great sire of all the snakes!”

A laugh rewarded this speech, the sentiment of which was generally echoed by the company. The speaker was a lovely and spirited woman, the fairest among the Carolina rebels, the witty, wealthy, and accomplished widow of Miles Brewton, Esq. The father of this lady, Edward Weyman, was among the first of the Carolina patriots to declare himself under “Liberty Tree” in 1766. She inherited his patriotism; and Mary Weyman was, by training and education, well fitted to become the wife of Brewton, who was as strenuous in support of the revolutionary argument as ever was his father-in-law. By marriage with this gentleman, she became strengthened in her attachment to the cause. Her associations rendered it the prevailing sentiment of the household. Her husband was brother to the celebrated Rebecca Motte, and uncle of Mrs. Thomas Pinckney; and their decided sentiments in behalf of the *mouvement* party in America, even if her own had been inactive, would have sufficed to

determine hers. But there needed nothing beyond her early training to bring about this result. She was not only a warm patriot, but a thoughtful and a witty one. While observing the utmost grace and delicacy in her deportment in the society of British and loyalists, not withholding herself from them—polite and even sociable with both—she was yet capable of uttering the most sharp and biting sarcasms with the most happy dexterity. Her mind was fresh, sparkling, and original; her manners equally graceful and lively; and she brought to the business of conspiracy a shrewdness and depth of opinion which appeared somewhat anomalous, though never unbecoming or out of place, in union with her pleasant wit and surpassing beauty.

“Why, Brewton,” said old Tom Singleton, playfully, “you speak with singular feeling of your venerable grandmother’s associates; as if, indeed, you had some personal cause of complaint.”

“And have I not? Is it not sufficient reason for complaint that her weaknesses should have left us perpetually subject to the sarcasms of your pestiferous sex; in which, though you always play the snake, you still chuckle at your capacity to take advantage of the woman?”

“Well, the worst reason for your discontent still remains unspoken,” said the other.

“Ah, what is that?”

“Verily, that your complaints avail you nothing, nor your resolves either; since you only murmur against a fate.”

“Which means that, doomed to a connection with your sex, we are never secure against the snake finding its way into our garden. I suppose *that is* our fate; but, at all events, there is no reason that we should not bruise his head with the hoe whenever we discover him. In the case before us, knowing the reptile, it is agreed we shall keep him at a distance. It will be no bad policy, whenever we do admit him, that we should first be careful to see that his teeth are drawn.”

“I am afraid,” said Singleton, “if you do that, you deprive him of all power of usefulness. But we need not discuss the matter further. It will be time enough to do so when we shall be perfectly satisfied that he has *cast his skin*. In the mean-

time, it is agreed that we leave him in the hands of Bob Singleton."

"Ay, ay," said the fair widow; "we may safely do so. *He* has quite enough of the family art to keep a menagerie, yet never fear the fangs or claws of its beasts."

The allusion was to a private collection of beasts, birds, and reptiles, which old Tom Singleton kept for his own amusement.

"Ah!" said the latter, who found something grateful in the allusion—"ah, Brewton, by the way, you are yet to make the acquaintance of my juveniles. I have added to my collection I have a Rawdon and a Balfour; a young Bruin from Buncombe, one of the most surly of dignitaries, brown and bigoted; and a surprising dexterous monkey from Yucatan, who is a perfect model of an appropriator. In a week, I shall have them both in costume, and you must come and make their acquaintance."

"Present me to his lordship, at least. The bear, by all odds, is preferable to the ape."

"Look you, Singleton," said Lockwood, bluntly, "you will peril your neck always upon your tongue. I pray you, Mrs. Brewton, say not a word further, or you will keep Singleton here all night. We have much to do before midnight, and old Tom belongs to that class of lawyers who prefer to lose a case rather than a witticism. He is so far like your own sex, that a last word with him at parting is essential to his rest for the night."

"Good! very good!" responded Singleton. "We may now claim, between us, to have a power like that of Falstaff, and are not only witty ourselves, but the cause of wit in other persons. Ah, Josh, make your bow to Brewton. She has been to you what the angel was to that excellent beast which Balaam knew better how to beat than ride."

"Away with you!" cried the widow. "You are as inveterate as an ague, and cause shaking sides wherever you come. Hence contagion! Begone, before we have another fit."

The party were preparing to leave—old Singleton, at least, with Lockwood and Master George Spidell, who, by this time, had begun to munch upon the angles of his three-cornered cake;

but, at this very moment, the trotting of horses was audible from the street.

“Hark!” said Mrs. Singleton, “they approach.”

The sounds ceased at the entrance, and the company rose in preparation, if not in apprehension. Frequent experience had made them instinctively conscious of danger.

“You can not go forth now,” said Mrs. Singleton, “and must steal to your hiding-places. We are to have visitors. You, cousin Tom, and Mr. Lockwood, had better take the back-door into the garden, while you, doctor and Master George, will please step up stairs. Take the basket with you, George.”

A heavy rap at the knocker, and the parties thus addressed hurried instantly out of sight, according to the given directions. In another moment, the doors were opened, and the British colonels, Balfour and Cruden, were announced

CHAPTER XXV.

SHAFTS AT RANDOM.

KATHARINE WALTON would have left the room when these persons were announced, but Mrs. Singleton arrested her. Policy was in conflict with good taste at present.

“You must remain, Kate; it is a necessary ordeal. Have patience. We must submit with a good grace where resistance is without profit. Let us conciliate those whom we can not defy.”

She was prevented, by the entrance of their guests, from further remarks of this nature. The ladies all had resumed their seats before the appearance of their visitors. Some were busy in needlework; one appeared to have been reading, her finger resting between the leaves of a volume that she held in her hand. The fair widow Brewton, alone seemed to be unemployed, as, perhaps, her more natural *rôle* lay rather at the tongue's, than the fingers' end. She occupied a venerable arm-chair, which might have dated from the time of Queen Elizabeth. In this she reclined rather than sat, the capacious seat giving full scope to her form, which was seen to the very best advantage. Thus reclined, with her head leaning over the side of the chair, rather than against its back, an arch smile playing on her features, and a world of mischief, concentrated and bright, looking forth from the half-shut eye, she encountered the first glance of the British dignitaries.

Balfour's hurried look around him took in the whole assembly. Mrs. Singleton rose at the entrance of the two—“*arcades ambo*”—and welcomed them to seats with a stately grace and a cold dignity that made itself felt, yet left nothing which could be complained of. Salutations were soon exchanged between the par-

ties. Balfour was quite ambitious of the character of the easy, well-bred gentleman. He aimed at that pleasant exhibition of *haut ton* which never forgets to show its consciousness of superiority.

"Mrs. Singleton, I am glad to see you looking so well. When I last had the pleasure of calling, you were complaining. You must give me credit for magnanimity, my dear madam, since we might well be out of humor with one who has a kinsman who proves so troublesome to us. I take for granted that you are aware of the recent performances of Mr. Robert Singleton. I could wish, for your sake, madam, if not his own, that this young man had not so deeply involved himself. I am afraid that he has passed that limit when it would have been the pleasure, no less than policy, of his majesty to hold out to him the hopes of mercy."

"You are very good, Colonel Balfour; but I doubt if Robert Singleton will easily be persuaded that this boon is so necessary to his happiness."

"Ah, my dear madam, do I find you still incorrigible?"

"At my age, sir, change of principle and feeling is not easy. You will give me credit, sir, for the frankness which has never, from the beginning, attempted any disguise of sentiment."

"I regret to make the concession, madam. I sincerely wish that it were otherwise. It is, perhaps, fortunate for all parties, however, that the cause of his majesty renders necessary no coercion in the case of your sex. We are content that time shall do its work. Events that are inevitable will perhaps reconcile you to a condition against which you erringly oppose yourself at present."

Mrs. Singleton bowed with a dignified gravity, but was silent. Balfour now passed round the table and approached Katharine Walton.

"And how is our fair captive?"

"Even as a captive should be, sir. I sigh for the green pastures. I have lost my voice. I sing no longer."

"We shall recall it! We shall hear you again in song. You will surely soon become reconciled to a captivity that brings you security under loving guardianship."

“Never! never! I am not conscious of any better security here than at Dorchester, nor do I need any more loving guardianship than that which I have always enjoyed.”

“Ah, I see that you are in the hands of erring counsellors. I am afraid, Mrs. Heyward, that something of this wilfulness is due to your ministry. Why is it that one so capable of devotion to a cause should yet be possessed of so little loyalty to her proper sovereign?”

“Meaning George the Third, Colonel Balfour?” replied the lady addressed, a very noble-looking lady, majestic in person, and of singularly fine features.

“Surely!”

“He is no sovereign of mine, sir!”

“My dear madam, will you never take warning from the past?”

“Would Colonel Balfour remind me of the assault upon my dwelling by a ruthless mob, when a dear sister lay dying in my arms? Would he force upon me the recollection of that dreadful brutality, which would have torn a woman to pieces because she refused to show pleasure in the misfortunes of her country? Really, sir, if this is the process by which my loyalty is to be taught, I fear that you will find me the dullest of your pupils.”

Balfour’s insolence, as usual, had made him blunder. The indignant feeling expressed by the lady was too natural and proper not to find the fullest justification in every mind. Mrs. Heyward’s dwelling was assailed and battered by a mob, because she refused to illuminate in honor of the successes of the British.

The commandant of Charleston turned away to some of the other ladies. He was somewhat abashed, but not silenced. After certain speeches meant to be gallant, addressed to Mrs. Savage and Mrs. Charles Elliott, he approached the fair widow Brewton. He was rather afraid of the lady, whose readiness of retort, sufficiently experienced by all of the British officers, was of a sort which enabled her to shape every answer to a dart, and to find, in the most cautiously-uttered address, the sufficient provocation to a witticism.

“Have I found thee, mine enemy?” he said.

“Knowing me as such,” she replied, “you have sought me out last. Shall I refer this to your gallantry or your caution — to the sense of my weakness or your own?”

“To mine own, of course,” he answered, bowing.

“The admission is an appeal to my magnanimity,” said the widow; “and yet the foe who acknowledges his feebleness and entreats for mercy has no longer the right to entertain a hostile feeling. He must surrender at discretion, in order to obtain the boon which he solicits.”

“Why, so I do! You have always found me at your feet.”

“Yes; but with the spirit of one who was weaving snares for them all the while.”

“Is the sex so easily enmeshed?” he answered, with a sneer.

“Good faith and innocence, which look upward always, are too frequently unconscious of the subtle enemy of whose existence they have no suspicion; since no feeling in their own bosom suggests its image, and they are too lofty in their souls to look *down* for objects of study and contemplation. But, when I spoke of the *snares* of the evil one, I said nothing of his *success*. We are told that the faithful and the true, the innocent and the good, shall always triumph in the end; we are equally assured that evil shall not always exist, and its triumphs shall be temporary. It is the special curse of sin that it must labor in the service of the devil, and without profit; must weave its snares with the toil and industry of the spider, day after day, only to be mortified constantly with the ease and freedom with which, at the proper moment, the supposed victim breaks through all the meshes woven about its feet. I assure you, colonel, when I behold you, and others in your livery, busily working, day and night, in this futile labor against the freedom of our people, I think of those long-legged gentry who congregate in the remote corners of the wall; and I look every moment for the approach of Molly with the house-broom.”

“Still keen, sharp, piercing, and cutting as ever.”

“How should it be otherwise, since, at every turning, we find the hone; the curious necessity of which seems to be to sharpen the instrument which shall finally separate it in twain.”

“Nay, your metaphor halts. The stone may suffer abrasion and diminution from wear; but to be cut in twain by the knife it sharpens——” He paused.

“I suppose I must not complain that a soldier in the service of such a prince as George of Hanover does not readily recall the lessons of history. My metaphor lacks nothing. My allusion was to the case of the Roman augur, Accius Nævius. Your Livy will tell you all the rest.”

“You gain nothing, Balfour,” said Cruden, sulkily, “in a conflict with Mrs. Brewton.”

“O, yes! I trust that both of you gain in proportion to your *need*. I shall suppose that to be far greater than I even regard it now, if, indeed, you do not profit in one respect. He who carries a weapon that he knows not well how to use, or encounters voluntarily with an enemy whom he can not overcome, is in a bad way, indeed, if he does not acquire some lessons of humility at least from such experience.”

“Wisely said, that, Cruden. But, of a truth, we must, in some way, overcome an enemy so formidable as Mrs. Brewton. We must do this by love, by service, by devotion, such as the cavaliers of the Middle Ages paid to their chosen mistresses. We must woo and win, if we can, where we can not overthrow. How shall we do this, Mrs. Brewton? You are surely not insensible to the reputation you would enjoy, and the good that you would do, in making us worthy of your affections rather than your hostilities?”

Alas, sir! If it be not sin to venture any opinion as to God’s hidden providence, I should say that he must find it easier to make a thousand new generations than to mend an old one. You must be born again, before anything can be done with you; and the fear is that, even then, the second childhood will find you quite as prone to perversion as the first.”

“Mrs. Brewton, you are incorrigible!”

“I am as God made me, sir; and if it be a proof that I am incorrigible, that I refuse to submit to any but proper authority, I bless God that he has endowed me with this quality!”

“You got my invitation?” asked Cruden, abruptly.

“Yes, I did; this morning.”

"Well, you are not too much of a patriot to come. Your stoicism and satire will hardly revolt at good fellowship?"

"Surely not. But I should accept your invitation from quite another motive."

"Ah, indeed! And pray what is that?"

"Patriotism is a gloomy virtue just now, and satire, in her circles, lacks all provocation. I shall go to yours in search of it. Of all medicines, I find the most perfect in being able to laugh at the follies of mine enemy."

"Well," said Cruden, doggedly, "I don't care on what footing you put it, so you come. I should rather you should laugh at us than be denied the pleasure of seeing you laugh at all."

"You improve decidedly in voice, as the fox said to the crow, whose cheese he envied. I shall surely look in upon you; but I warn you to do your handsomest. In entering the house you occupy, I shall be reminded of many a pleasant and joyous party in the circle of Cotesworth Pinckney; and though I can scarcely look to the British officers in Charleston to supply all of the essentials which made that circle a pride and a delight, yet, in mere externals, I take for granted, as you have all the means, you will not suffer yourself to be outdone."

"We shall certainly do our best to find favor with one whom we so anxiously desire to win," was the answer, with a bow.

In regard to this appointed *fête*, Cruden had already been speaking, though in under tones, with Katharine Walton. Balfour now made it the subject of remark to her.

"We shall have the pleasure of seeing you there, Miss Walton. You must not suffer yourself to adopt this ungenial humor of your associates. Nay, I would prefer that you should even put on the mocking spirit of my witty foe, Mrs. Brewton, and make your appearance, though it be only to find cause for sarcasm."

"Colonel Cruden requires my attendance, and I submit to his wishes," replied the maiden, calmly.

"Nay, I could wish that you recognised rather the requisitions of society than of authority, in this matter."

"It need not be a subject of discussion, sir, whether I obey my own will in this respect, or that of another. If not indis-

posed, I shall certainly be present. I have no wish to increase the animosities which exist between our friends respectively."

"A proper feeling, and one that might, with more profit, be entertained by all."

An interval ensued in the conversation, which we have only detailed in portions. On a sudden, the eye of Balfour caught sight of a pair of large gloves upon the table. He stretched out his hands and gathered them up.

"Are these yours, Cruden?" he asked.

"No. Mine are here."

He turned them over, and muttered—

"They are not mine, yet are they a man's."

Mrs. Singleton quietly interposed—

"They are probably Tom Singleton's. He was with us a while ago."

Balfour smiled skeptically. He had, in the meantime, while turning the gloves over, discovered the initials "D. R.," printed legibly within them. He said nothing, but threw them back upon the table. At this moment, a strange sound was heard from an inner passage conducting to the stairway. It was strange because of its suddenness, but of no doubtful character. Every ear at once distinguished it as issuing from a human proboscis—a most decided snore, such as might be expected naturally to issue from the nostrils of a lusty urchin after a supper in excess, and from sleeping in an awkward position. Balfour and Cruden smiled, and looked knowingly in the faces of the ladies. But Mrs. Singleton remained entirely unmoved, and the rest looked quite unconscious. The snore was repeated with renewed emphasis.

"Not a bad imitation of Tarleton's bugles," was the remark of Balfour.

"It reminds me very much of one of Knyphausen's," responded Cruden; "that of the little Hessian who had lost his nose by a sabre-cut. You remember him? When he blew, it was evidently the play of two distinct instruments, the one, however, clearly inferior to the other."

"Yet it *would* maintain the rivalry, and continued to do so to the last. The nostrils—all that remained of them—never

would give way to the bugle; and 'Drick'—so they called him—short for Frederick, probably—went on blowing a double bugle, doing the service of two men, until a shot through his lungs cut off effectually the supply of wind necessary for both instruments."

The music from the interior audibly increased.

"That instrument might be trained to good service, like that of 'Drick,'" continued Balfour, who was apt to pursue his own jests to the death. "It has all the compass and volume, and the blasts are quite as well prolonged, without subsiding into that squeak or snivel, which rendered 'Drick's' music rather unpleasant at the close. Pray, Mrs. Singleton, where were you so fortunate as to find your bugler?"

The old lady replied with most admirable gravity.

"Really, Colonel Balfour, but for the sex of poor Sally, she should be at your service in that capacity. Kate, my dear, go and wake up the girl, she is asleep on the stairs."

Katharine rose, and Balfour also.

"Suffer me, Miss Walton, to save you this trouble," said the officious commandant, somewhat eagerly, advancing, as he spoke, toward the door leading to the passage.

But it was not the policy of Mrs. Singleton that he should find Master Spidell in her dwelling. Kate Walton hesitated. The old lady spoke, coolly, deliberately, yet with a manner that was conclusive.

"Thank you, Colonel Balfour; but I prefer that you should see Sally out of *deshabille*. I can't answer for the stupid creature's toilet at this hour. That she has so far forgotten herself as to bestow her music on us from such near neighborhood, makes me doubt how far her trespasses may be carried. Do *you* see to her, Kate; we will dispense with the commandant's assistance, even in a duty so arduous as that of routing up a drowsy negro."

The last phrase forced Balfour once more into his seat. He felt how greatly his dignity would suffer at being caught in the proposed office. Had he any suspicions, they would have been quite hushed in the consideration of his own *amour propre*, and in the coolness and admirable composure maintained by Mrs

Singleton. Her allusion to the possible *abandon* of Sally, in the matter of costume and toilet, which made the younger ladies cast down their eyes, was also suggestive, to the coarse nature of the commandant, of a sort of humor which is properly confined to the barracks. We will not undertake to repeat the sorry equivoques in which he indulged, under a mistake, natural enough to such a person, that he was all the while very mischievously witty.

Kate Walton, meanwhile, had penetrated the passage and wakened up the sleeping boy. He had been doubled up upon the stairs, and a few more convulsions of the nostrils might have sent him rolling downward. Fortunately his shoes were off, and, roused cautiously, he was enabled to retrace his steps to the upper room, where Ramsay was impatiently—but without daring to move—awaiting the departure of the hostile guests.

This event was not long delayed after the occurrence described. Having exhausted his stock of flippancies, and succeeded in whispering some soft flatteries into the ears of Katharine, Balfour turned to Mrs. Brewton, reserving his "*last words*" for her. He said something to this effect, spoke of his testamentary addresses; and the retort, quick as lightning, sent him off in a jiffy.

"Ah, Colonel Balfour, were they indeed your '*last words*,' you know not how gladly we should all forgive your offences—nay, with what gratitude we should accept the atoning sacrifice, as more than compensative for all the evils done in your very short life!"

"Confound her tongue!" exclaimed the enraged commandant to his companion, as they left the house together. "It is all Tartar! What a viper she has at the end of it! But I shall have my revenge. She is at mischief, and shall pay for it. These people are all conspiring; those gloves were Dr. Ramsay's; and you heard the old woman admit that Tom Singleton had but lately left them. The hag said the gloves were *his*, not dreaming that I had seen Ramsay's initials in them. I have no doubt that both are in the house at this moment. They will emerge probably very soon after they hear us ride away. Now let us see if we can not detect them. By occupying the

opposite corners, we can readily see all who pass, and, ten to one, we find Ramsay, Singleton, and others whom we do not suspect, who have been at this secret meeting, I only want a pretext for putting them all in limbo. There is more confiscation to be done, Cruden."

"All's grist that comes to my mill," was the response of Cruden, with a hoarse chuckle, as he mounted his horse.

A groom, in the undress costume of a soldier, stood in waiting, his own steed beside him, as he brought up that of Balfour. To him the latter gave his instructions, and the party divided in opposite directions, moving off at a moderate canter.

The sound of their departing footsteps brought the male conspirators from their several places of hiding. Tom Singleton and Lockwood looked in from the garden impatiently, summoning Ramsay and the boy, George, from the interior. Meanwhile, the unlucky gloves were once more brought upon the *tapis*. Mrs. Brewton had remarked the peculiar smile upon Balfour's visage as he turned them over and heard them ascribed to Singleton, and her curiosity was awakened. The moment he had gone, she darted from her seat, and hastily snatching up the gloves, discovered the two capital letters conspicuously printed within the wrist.

"Now, out upon the man," she cried, indignantly, "who must set his sign-manual upon all his possessions, however insignificant, as if he for ever dreaded robbery!—who must brand ox, and ass, and everything that is his, with his proper arms and initials! Oh, doctor"—turning to him as he entered, and holding up the gloves, big with his initials, before his eyes—"for a wise man you do a great many foolish things! Look at that! See the tell-tales you carry with you wherever you go!"

"Ah, Brewton, this was certainly a childish folly. But wisdom affords few impunities, since, in due proportion with our knowledge, is the conviction we feel of the vast possessions that we can never acquire. I shall take care of this hereafter. In the meantime, has any mischief been done?"

"Balfour has read the initials."

"He knows, then, that I have been here. But this is nothing."

“Much to him; regarding you, as he must, with suspicion.”

“Besides, it was unlucky,” said Mrs. Singleton, “that, supposing them the gloves of Cousin Tom, I admitted that *he* had just left us also. To know that you both were here, and with us, all of whom are looked upon with evil eyes, is to set his suspicions at work. We must move more cautiously.”

“Right!” said Singleton and Lockwood, in a breath. “And, to do this, the sooner we *move off* together the better, the tide will soon serve for George.”

“He has given us proof to-night,” said the widow, “that he will never want a wind.”

A laugh followed this, and poor George hung his head, inwardly swearing vengeance against his own unlucky nose, that had so greatly exposed and almost betrayed him. He seized his basket and moved toward the door. Ramsay was moving in the same direction, when Tom Singleton interposed.

“Look you, doctor, you certainly don’t mean to take Church street? That won’t do! If Balfour has the slightest reason to suppose that we have been here to-night, and have been so much hurried as to leave our gloves, he will naturally suppose us here still, and will set a watch for us. We must take the back track, scramble over the fences, and find our way out upon the Bay.”

“That is awkward,” said Ramsay, hesitatingly.

“So it is, doctor; but advisable, nevertheless.”

Some preliminaries were discussed, and the plan was settled upon. Hurried partings were interchanged, and, stealing down through the garden, the four, including the boy George, prepared to climb the fence, which was a high, ragged breastwork of half-decayed pine plank. Tom Singleton went over first, followed by the boy George; but the worthy doctor hung in mid-air for a season, his skirts having caught upon a huge spike in the fence, which had not been perceived, and which narrowly grazed the more susceptible flesh. Singleton and Lockwood both were employed in his extrication, which was only effected by increasing the rent in the changeable silk breeches of the worthy doctor. The scene provoked Singleton, whose risibles were readily brought into play, into insuppressible merriment.

"I do not see what there is so ludicrous in the matter," said Ramsay, almost sternly.

"Indeed, but there is," was the answer; "when we reflect upon the predicament of the future historian of America, skewered upon a rusty nail in an old wall, and as incapable of helping himself as was Absalom caught by the hair."

Ramsay's intention of writing a history of the whole country was already known to his friends. Singleton continued—

"It would make a glorious picture for the book, doctor, to have you drawn on the fence-top, with Lockwood and myself tugging at your skirts."

"This is no time for nonsense, Singleton: let us go on." was the doctor's somewhat surly reply.

The party, in silence, then pursued a somewhat circuitous route, which, under Singleton's guidance, familiar equally with the highways and byways of the town, promised to be a safe one. Crossing several fences, in which toil the historian suffered no further mishaps of habiliment, they at length found themselves in a well-known enclosure, near the corner of Tradd street and the Bay. The region, at that period, presented an aspect very different from its appearance now. The Bay was then, instead of a well-paved avenue, a mere quagmire in wet weather. The sea penetrated it in numerous little indentations, which left the passage exceedingly narrow when the tide was high; and the chief obstruction to its constant invasion was the various bastions and batteries which looked out upon the harbor; though, even in the rear of these, the water occasionally formed in pools that might be called lakelets.

Before reaching this limit, our fugitives held a hurried consultation under a group of guardian fig-trees that occupied the lot, now covered by stately buildings of brick, which still interposed between them and the thoroughfare. Finally, it was agreed that Lockwood and George should go forth first, making their way upward to the place of concealment for their boat, which lay not far distant from the Governor's bridge; while Singleton and Ramsay, after a certain interval, were to pursue their homeward course, singly, and with all possible circumspection. These arrangements brought them late into the night.

The morning star saw Lockwood and George passing over Deadman's Ground and into the shadowy gorges of the Wando river; while Ramsay, safe in his own chamber, was curiously inspecting the serious hurts which his changeable silk small-clothes had suffered from his unwonted exercises. The whole party escaped the *surveillance* of Balfour, who, after the delay of an hour, impatiently consumed in watching, rode back to the house of Mrs. Singleton only to find it all in darkness. He naturally concluded that the prey had escaped before his visit. Let us change the scene.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE REBEL'S MENAGERIE.

WE have seen Major Proctor in possession of all the materials which the hatred of Vaughan, his cunning, and that of Balfour, were preparing to adduce against him for his destruction. Thus warned, he was measurably armed. He had no reason to doubt the testimony thus put into his hands; though still ignorant of his secret friend, and totally without clues which might lead to her discovery. He was now, however, better prepared than before, to believe in the conjecture of Furness, that his correspondent was really a woman. In the haste with which Ella Monckton had abridged, or copied the documents which she had sent him, she had somewhat forgotten her former caution. She had commenced her work in the stiff, feigned hand which she had formerly employed in communicating with him; but, as she proceeded and grew more and more absorbed in her labors, her artifices were neglected, and the greater portion of the manuscript was evidently not only in a female hand, but in a *natural* one; written hurriedly, and exhibiting a singular contrast between the style of penmanship with which she had begun and that with which she finished. Still, the hand was totally unknown to him, and he brooded over it with an interest greatly increased in the writer, moved equally by curiosity and gratitude. He could only content himself with the reflection that, with the *natural* handwriting in his possession, his prospects, hereafter, of discovering the fair unknown were something better than before; and, if the truth were told, he now began to feel quite as much interest in this new object as was consistent

with the paramount necessity of using her information, with all despatch, for the purposes of his defence.

Here his difficulties began. It was now that he needed a friend, like Furness, present in the city, who would counsel with and assist him. Furness had promised to bring him to the knowledge of such a friend, and had furnished him with a note to one of the citizens of Charleston, premising, at the same time, that the person to whom it was addressed, though once an intimate with the father and family of the loyalist, was yet himself a warm supporter of the *mouvement* party, and had been active in the labors of the patriots. Proctor had put this note of introduction into his trunk, and had not looked at the superscription, except in the first moment when he received it. That moment was one in which his mind was busy with other matters. It was, indeed, the very moment of parting with his new friend, and the feelings natural to the occasion made him oblivious, even while he read, of the name which he beheld written on the envelope. He now took the letter from his trunk, and was quite surprised as he examined it.

“ To THOMAS SINGLETON, Esq., Charleston.

“ By friendly favor of Major Proctor,” &c., &c.

Old Tom Singleton, one of the rankest of the rebels of the city ; a man bitterly uncompromising in his hostility to the British cause ; a wit, a humorist, full of perpetual sneer and sarcasm at the expense of the invaders—how should Captain Furness, of the loyalists, be in communion with such a person ? A little reflection answered the question. The best friends, the nearest kindred in the colony, had been divided by this unnatural war. This was no reason for the disruption of all the ties of friendship and society. Besides, Furness had expressly announced Singleton as of the other party, but had still spoken of him as a friend of his family—as an honest man, and one of those shrewd, acute, penetrating persons whose counsels would be particularly useful in his emergency. That emergency was pressing upon Proctor now. The British interests no longer commanded his sympathy. Its leaders had wronged and were pursuing him with hatred and injustice. Why should he scru-

ple to seek and accept the services of a friend who would serve his individual cause, without seeking to know, or feeling disquiet at, his political sympathies?

Proctor soon satisfied himself of the propriety—nay, necessity—of visiting the satirical graybeard, Tom Singleton, in his domicile in Tradd street. But he resolved, also, that he must move cautiously. He remembered the counsel of Furness, whose shrewdness he could not but acknowledge. He must do nothing rashly.—There was no need, for example, that his servant-man, John, the traitor, still in his employment, should be able to report to Vaughan, or Balfour, that he followed him to the dwelling of a well-known rebel. He sent John, accordingly, out of the way, with a missive, quite innocent in its character, to a remote quarter of the city. There was as little need that *any* curious eyes should notice where he himself went. He chose, therefore, the night as the time for his purposed visit; and between eight and nine of the evening, traversing the unlighted streets, he soon found himself in front of the little old-fashioned brick building, of two stories, with tall, pointed roof, which old Singleton occupied. The door was promptly opened at his knock, and Singleton himself received him at the entrance of his parlor, opening directly on the street.

The old man seemed disappointed when, holding the candle to the face of his visiter, he discovered who he was. He had evidently expected a very different person.—He had seen Proctor before, but failed to recognise him. The British officer at once relieved his curiosity.

“Major Proctor, Mr. Singleton, late of the post at Dorchester.”

“Ah! and to what, Major Proctor, am I indebted for the honor of this visit? I am not aware that it is just now in my power to be of any service to his majesty's cause in this province. These arms are no longer able to carry sword or musket; my wits are of little use even to myself, since Lord North has become the monopolist of all the wisdom in the united kingdom and its dependencies; and, for the matter of money, sir, why you will scarce believe me, but I now find it impossible to gratify my usual appetite for *whiting* and *cavalli*. To go to the fish market now-a-days, is only to provoke the most gnawing

and painful sensations. In brief, sir, forced subsidies would scarcely disquiet me, since it would give me as much pleasure if our noble commandant of Charleston could find out my ways and means, as to find them out myself”

“Pardon me, Mr. Singleton, but I am here with no official object. At all events, the commandant of Charleston would be as little likely to employ me upon any service as to employ yourself.”

“Ah, indeed!”

“Let me put this letter into your hands, sir, which will explain the true object of my visit, and probably furnish a sanction for this intrusion.”

“Be seated, sir, Major Proctor,” said Singleton, as he took the letter. Taking a seat himself without preliminary, and putting on his great gold spectacles, the old man, the light in one hand, the letter in the other, proceeded to master the contents of the paper. The name of “Furness,” dubitantly uttered, arose to his lips; but he soon discovered what, even had Proctor read the billet, he would not be likely to have seen, the two Greek letters which Robert Singleton usually incorporated with the flourish below his name. The letter was read with the greatest deliberation, then folded, then quietly passed into the flame of the candle, and the burning scroll deposited in the chimney-place. Fixing his deep gray eye upon the features of his visiter, old Singleton extended his hand.

“Major Proctor, I am glad to see you, and will be glad to serve you; though my young friend, Furness, entirely overrates my capacity to do so. But I consider it quite a compliment to my heart, if not to my head, that he has written and referred you to me. I need not tell you, sir, that I am quite of another way of thinking from himself. He has chosen to take up arms against his people, and I naturally feel some bitterness on the subject. But I knew and loved his father, sir; he entertained me in his mountain region with a warm hospitality, and when I lay for a month dangerously sick in his dwelling, his excellent wife nursed me with as much affection as if I had been her own brother. The young Furness, too, was a smart and proper boy, and promised to be a strong and thoughtful man. I love him for his parents’ sake, and would be happy if he had suffered me

to love him for his own. But he is wrong, sir; he has been dreadfully erring. You have *your* excuse in serving your sovereign in this war; but what is the excuse for him who pleads duty in justification, while he cuts the throat of his kinsman and his neighbor?"

All this calmly, sadly spoken, sufficed admirably to impress the British officer with the entire truthfulness of the whole narrative. Proctor said something by way of excuse for the young loyalist, but the other interrupted him.

"There is an argument, Major Proctor, for every error, and poor Humanity will never want a lie to justify any of her failings to herself. But your matter is private. We are here upon the street. Come with me into my den, where we can speak in safety."

He led the way into an inner room, plainly furnished, and thence, by a back door, down into an apartment in the cellar—a low-ceiled vault, which had been fitted up with some care for comfort, if not display. The room was plastered and carpeted. There was no fireplace, and the wall against which it should have stood was covered with books. These were not seen, however, until a second candle had been lighted; and then Proctor discovered enough to confirm the report, which he had heard before, of the eccentricity of old Tom Singleton. There were a pair of huge Angola cats lying with heads together beneath the table; a cage of wire, suspended from the wall, contained an immense rattlesnake, whose eyes reflected the glare of the candles with the brightness of a pair of diamond lustres in the bosom of an Indian princess. On the floor, directly beneath the cage, was a large tub, in which an occasional plash was heard, as of a fish struggling for sea-room; and all about the room might be seen frames of stuffed and cages of living birds. In a remote corner, covered with shelves, Proctor heard the frequent rattling of sheets of paper, and was occasionally startled at the whizzing of some small object close to his face, which he at one time fancied to be the sportive assaults of some enormous beetle, but which might have been a missile. He was soon informed of the source of his annoyance by the sharp accents of his host, addressed to an object which he did not see.

“To your sleep, Lord George, before I trounce you!” and there was a rustle again among the paper, as if the object addressed was preparing to obey. “You are in my den, Major Proctor, you will please remember—I should rather call it my *menagerie*—so you will please be startled at nothing.”

“Do I hear the rattle of a snake?” said Proctor, with a shudder.

“Yes; I have a most glorious monster in that cage, with but seven rattles; he is fully as large as any I have seen with twice the number. He is harmless. I have drawn his fangs. That fish which you hear plashing in the tub is the torpedo. I paralyzed one of your dragoons the other day by a touch, which will make him careful never to grapple with fish again until he sees it fried and on table. The little monster which annoyed you by his dexterity of aim—your nose being between him and the light, he evidently strove to see how nearly he could come to the one without extinguishing the other—is a monkey, of which I have large expectations. I call him Lord George, after your famous nobleman, Germaine, who behaved so well upon the plains of Minden, and so bravely in the walls of Parliament house. You shall see Lord George.”

The monkey was summoned from his perch, and, at the word, he leaped from the shelf where he harbored directly upon the table. The cats were awakened by the movement, and raised themselves quickly to their feet; hair bristling all the while, backs rising in anger, and tongues hissing and snapping at the annoyer, who had now approached the edge of the table and was looking down wickedly upon the apprehensive pair. To Proctor's surprise, and, we may add, indignation, the monkey was habited as a British general officer.

“Head up, Lord George,” cried old Singleton.

The beast took an attitude of great dignity, head up, nose in air, and right hand upon his breast.

“Your sword, Lord George.”

Off he sprang to a dark corner of the room, whence he returned instantly with the implement, which he waved aloft in the most threatening manner, marching across the table with an immense strut, and audaciously confronting the visiter. Proctor

was half tempted to seize and wring the neck of the mocking little monster, whose antics and costume he beheld with a feeling of vexation, which he found it difficult to suppress.

“Do you not incur some peril, Mr. Singleton, in this caricature of the uniform of his majesty’s service?”

“My dear sir, did you happen to see the corps of black dragoons sent off to Monk’s Corner some weeks ago, in his majesty’s uniform, and commanded by Captain Quash—the very picture of the Jack of spades done in scarlet! If you ever saw that troop, uniformed by Balfour himself, you will be satisfied that none of his majesty’s officers have a right to quarrel with the costume of my Lord George here, or, if you please”—in lower terms—“Colonel Balfour.”

Proctor was silent. He felt the sarcasm. Old Singleton addressed the monkey—

“Hence to bed; and no more noise, do you hear, or”—and he pointed threateningly to the tub where swam the torpedo.

The monkey shuddered, bowed gracefully to both the gentlemen, and disappeared in silence.

“I make one of my beasts the terror of the other. I threaten the cat with the monkey, the monkey with the fish, the snake with the eagle—”

“Have you an eagle?”

“A pair of them; but they are wretched things in a cage, like our poor people in this struggle. I shall set them free the very next victory which follows to our arms.”

Proctor slightly smiled. Singleton saw the smile, but did not appear to notice it. He proceeded—

“I am strangely fond of beasts, otherwise outlawed, and I moralise upon them with a taste like that of Jacques in the forest. Thus, what a lesson against pomp and vanity are the egregious pretensions of my Lord George, the monkey! How my snake venomous, but fangless, illustrates envy, malice, and all uncharitableness! My cats, snarling even when in clover, are fashionable married people, whose spite and bad humor are but natural consequences of a life of indolence. My spiritless eagles teach me the blessings of freedom; but, mark you, to those only who, from the first, have been endowed with the

faculty of living in the eye of the sun, and bathing in the upper air. And my fish—but enough. I am an egotist when I moralize upon my beasts. I must apologize for not thinking of your affairs; but, in truth, you needed an introduction to my associates. It is one satisfaction that I feel in bringing you to know them, that not one of them will betray your secrets. You *have* secrets, it appears from the letter of—ah—Furness; and I aim to assist you with my counsels. Major Proctor, I am a whig, and you a Briton. Command my counsels in anything not inconsistent with our respective politics, and I am yours.”

Proctor took the extended hand, and thanked him with a warmth proper to the frankness with which the old man made his offer of service.

“My loyalty shall not seek to obtain any advantage over your patriotism, Mr. Singleton. My affair, though it brings me into collision with my superiors, is yet wholly personal.”

With this introduction, Proctor proceeded to unfold the whole history, as already in our possession, of his conflict with Vaughan and Balfour, his exercise of command at Dorchester, his relations with Colonel Walton and daughter, and those subsequently which had made Furness interested in his affairs. Nor were the anonymous communications of his fair correspondent forgotten. His statement concluded with the exhibition of the whole body of documentary testimony which was preparing to be brought against him. This old Singleton examined curiously.

“The hand is unknown to me; but Furness is right. It is a woman’s hand. His conjecture as to her interest in you is right also. These last papers might enable you to find out who she is, if that were an object.

“That *is* an object,” said Proctor.

“But not necessary to your case.”

Perhaps not; but the curiosity is natural and—”

“Justifiable. You certainly owe much to the lady. But now to the papers. These documents are derived from fountain-head. I have no doubt that they are genuine copies, and that they show truly what you have to guard against. It might be well, however, if we could arrive at the possible source of your infor-

mation. Balfour has two regular secretaries, both mere lads; one named Monckton, the other Hesk. Do you know either?"

"I do not. But he has others occasionally."

"Are you intimate with them, or with any of his aids?"

"No."

"Nor his associates, Barry, Cruden—?"

"We have nothing in common. Colonel Cruden is my uncle; but he values the commissions on confiscated estates much more than any claims of kindred, and he is the ally of Balfour, as a matter of policy. As for Barry, he is a vain fopling, a small wit, who has no sympathies, no heart, no magnanimity—"

"Egad, you have learned to appreciate justly the dominant virtues of our conquerors. You have no clew, then, to this writing?"

"None but what I relate."

"We must leave that matter, then, for the present. And now for this body of evidence. On the face of it, you perceive that it is formidable. It makes out a strong case against you. Something will depend upon these witnesses, much upon such as you can bring to rebut them. The details of this testimony are all of a sort to be severally rebutted. Who is this Gradock?"

"A squatter in the neighborhood of Dorchester, who brought us supplies of game and fish; a poor, worthless fellow, claiming to be half Indian, but who is, probably, half mulatto. His character is notoriously bad. He is a great liar, and a wretched drunkard."

"Have you testimony to that effect? This Blonay—"

"Dead. A fellow of like description."

"Clymes, or Clymer?"

"Clymes?"

Proctor answered all the questions of old Singleton; and, in this way, the whole body of testimony was sifted. We need not pursue the details of the investigation. The result for the present may be given in the old man's language.

"It is clear that you must visit Dorchester and the neighborhood, with reference to all these witnesses. You must meet their testimony by that of other witnesses, or convict them out

of their own mouths. At all events, get sufficient proof of the sort of people to be sworn against you. Do you know old Pryor, of Dorchester?"

"He is, secretly, a rebel."

"But none the less an honest man. At this moment, it will be wise, Major Proctor, to dismiss your prejudices as a British officer. Pryor is a rough dog, scarcely civil of speech, but with a man's heart; and he will serve you faithfully if you can persuade him to take an interest in your affairs. These witnesses against you have, you think, been *bought* up by your enemies. Old Pryor was once a sort of king over all the people in that quarter. He can probably assist you in getting the truth out of some of these hirelings. Gradock, you see, and Clymes are the persons whose testimony is most likely to be troublesome. These must be managed, and Pryor is probably the very person to undertake this part of the business. He can do it for you, or put you in the proper way to do it for yourself. At all events, your policy is to proceed to Dorchester with all the despatch and all the secrecy possible."

The whole process underwent examination between the parties. The details of the contemplated plan of action need not be discussed further at this stage of our narrative. Enough, that the shrewdness, good sense, acuteness, and rare knowledge of persons, possessed by old Singleton, surprised Proctor, and encouraged him to believe that he could meet all the difficulties of his case. At the close of their interview, Proctor requested him to take charge of his papers, referring to the secret espionage of his servant, John, and the insecurity of his own chambers.

"Do you keep that fellow still?" demanded Singleton.

"I was counselled to do so by Captain Furness. His opinion was that any person whom I should get in his place would be equally liable to be corrupted; while, by keeping *him*, I disarmed the suspicions of my enemies in regard to my knowledge of their schemes; and, knowing John, I was better prepared to guard against him."

"A sensible fellow is Furness. He is probably right. Well, Major Proctor, I will be your depositary. You are probably

not unaware of the fact that my own position here is one of great insecurity. I am at any moment liable to be seized in my bed, and sent to *provost* or prison-ship, at the whim and mere caprice of your despotic commander. But I have places of hiding for your papers such as will be likely for some time to escape search. My rattlesnake shall take your secrets into keeping. Behold what a snug *escritoir* he has for the service of my friends."

This said, the old man touched a spring in the bottom of the cage in which the serpent lay coiled in repose. A false bottom was instantly revealed, showing a shallow drawer, which already contained sundry papers. The rattle of the snake was quickly sprung, and the burnished head of the monster was threateningly raised at the same moment.

"He is on the watch, you see. Few persons would prosecute a search in this quarter, with so vigilant and terrible a guardian of its secrets. Give me the papers."

"One recommendation, Mr. Singleton," said Proctor, "before I leave you. Your kindness to me and interest in my affairs will justify me in speaking of yours. Take your monkey out of his uniform! Balfour would scarcely forgive you the caricature, particularly as you have caparisoned the beast in a costume very much like his own."

"Fashioned directly after it, I confess. And do you observe I have taught him the genuine Balfour strut and carriage?" said the old man with a complacent chuckle.

"A dangerous experiment, which, if known, will be certain to get you lodgings in the provost."

"Poo! poo! my young friend, this alarms me nothing. What matters it upon what plea, whether of fun or patriotism, I get into limbo? When it is needful to dispose of me, Balfour will never lack a pretext. In the meantime shall I be without my amusement? In the 'durance vile' of my present condition, it is something when I can laugh at the antics of the enemy whose claws I have yet to fear."

Proctor shook his head. He saw that old Singleton was one of those men who never lose their joke in their perils, and he forbore all further exhortations, which he felt would be waste of

counsel. They had much talk besides, but such as we may dispense with in this narrative. Returning to his lodgings, the British officer found his man John returned, and looking very curious at his absence. But he gave him little heed, The next morning he was on his way to Dorchester; but not unattended!

CHAPTER XXVII.

CAPTIVITY.

BALFOUR was soon apprized, by the treacherous servant, of the absence of Proctor from his lodgings the night before; and the impossibility of accounting for it, as usual, led to the conjecture that John had been sent out of the way, simply that he might not follow the footsteps of the master. When, the next day, Proctor left the city, it was determined by the commandant, after a long conference with John, that the latter should pursue him, but in a disguise, and on a horse which Balfour furnished. Two hours, accordingly, had not elapsed, when the faithless servant was on the tracks of his master. The progress of Proctor was not so rapid but that he could be easily overtaken by an eager pursuer. Fifteen miles from the city the spy distinguished him about half a mile ahead. He maintained this distance for the rest of the journey.

Proctor reached Dorchester and proceeded to take lodgings at the house of Humphries, "The Royal George," the better to avoid suspicion. A rival tavern was kept by Pryor, but, as he was a suspected whig, he no longer received the public patronage. Even the patriots, in order to escape suspicion, avoided the dwelling of one with whom they yet thoroughly sympathized.

The spy, whom practice had made an adept, having ascertained the manner in which his master had disposed of himself, went at once to the post of Dorchester, carrying letters from Balfour to Vaughan. His horse groomed and stabled, he left the fortress under cover of the night and established a watch upon the house of Humphries. After supper, Proctor came forth, and, as

the localities were all well known to him, he took the direct route for the neglected hotel of Pryor. Thither the spy followed him; but, beyond the single fact that he saw his master enter this dwelling, he gathered nothing from his espionage. Pryor received his visiter at the entrance, and conducted him to an inner apartment, where in the course of an hour's conversation, Proctor unfolded all the difficulties in his case, and indicated the extent of service which the other might perform for him.

Though a blunt, rude man, and a fierce whig, Pryor was not hostile to Proctor. The latter, in command of Dorchester, had done his spiritings so gently as to have compelled the respect of the people generally. Besides, the service desired by him was one which aimed to defeat the machinations of Balfour and Vaughan, both of whom were hated, and was further commended to him by a brief letter from old Tom Singleton, whom our landlord well knew and greatly honored. The consequence was that Pryor took up heartily the cause of his visiter.

"It can be done, Major Proctor. It *shall* be done!" said Pryor with an oath. "I will do it. I can manage Gradock and Clymes, but I must have money and my own way."

"You shall have both," was the prompt reply.

Twenty guineas were at once put into his hauds.

"This will do," returned the landlord. "If more is wanted I will contrive that you shall know it. You shall hear of me through old Tom Singleton. He will tell you that your money will be safe in my hands."

Proctor quickly declared that he needed no such assurance.

"Nevertheless, major, it's in the way of business that you should have it. And now that we understand what's to be done, we don't need you any longer. You must be off with to-morrow's sun. You can be of no service in dealing with these people, and your presence here will only occasion suspicion, and make the affair difficult to manage. Of course, Balfour knows all about your coming here."

"Scarcely."

"Don't you believe it. He knows you've left the city. If he's busy, as you think, in this matter, and really desires to destroy you, and if your man John be in his employ, and is the

rascal you think him—and which I verily believe—I never could bear the fellow—then, be sure, that he has sent a spy after you.”

“I saw no one,” replied Proctor, with rare simplicity.

“Oh, to be sure not! It is a spy’s business to see and not to be seen. But do you so act as if you felt that every footstep which you take is watched. Go back to Humphries, and ask the old scoundrel all sorts of questions in regard to the affair of the rescue of Colonel Walton. Don’t say a syllable of Gradock and Clymes. Talk only of Marion’s men, and the goggle-eyed tory Blonay. This will lead them off the scent. Set off with the dawn to-morrow, or an hour before it, and, by sunrise, I’ll report everything to Vaughan, just as Humphries will be sure to do. This will save me harmless. Otherwise, I should be very apt to enjoy the bayonet pricks of a corporal’s guard before I had fairly swallowed breakfast. We must be artful. We must fight fire with fire.”

Satisfied that things were now in proper train in this quarter, Proctor left the shrewd old landlord and returned to play the game prescribed with the loyalist, Humphries. We need not dwell upon the details. The counsel of Pryor was closely followed, and the whole history of the rescue of Walton, by Marion’s men, was deliberately discussed, point by point, in all its particulars, under the dubious lights accorded by the wit or wisdom of the tory landlord.

With dawn, Proctor was already crossing Eagle bridge, gazing sternly, as he passed, upon the little fortress in which his experiences for more than a year, had been those of unmixed trial and bitterness. His heart was filled with the maledictions which his lips did not utter, as he thought of his enemy, Vaughan; and his hand griped fiercely the handle of his sword in a mute but expressive thirst for the moment when he could close the account of enmity between them in the deadly arbitrament of fight. He little dreamed that his action was beheld, and its import properly divined. The traitor John was also in the saddle, and, from a neighboring covert, had him clearly in his eye. Proctor drove the spur into his steed and darted forward; and the other dogged resolutely after him, taking due

care not to draw too nigh, yet as careful never long to lose his master from his sight.

The spirits of Proctor grew more elastic as he rode. There is something in the very effort to foil an enemy which contributes to the conviction that the thing may be done; and the exhortations of Furness, of old Singleton, and Pryor—their counsels, and the cool readiness with which their several faculties had been brought to bear, in the same manner, and upon the same game—seemed to relieve it from all its embarrassments. For a moment, it occurred to the British major as something singular that his two agents in the business should both be of the patriotic or rebel party; and that he should owe his acquaintance with Singleton to the interposition of a provincial loyalist—though sufficiently explained by the former—was yet a circumstance which continually occurred to his thoughts as something curious. Nor did it escape him, as also among the catalogue of things to occasion surprise, that Pryor should speak so confidently of communicating with old Singleton whenever the necessity for it should occur.

But Proctor had become quite too cold, as a subject of his royal master, and entertained quite too little sympathy with the existing powers in Carolina, to allow himself to meditate these doubts with his usual vigilance. If there was anything suspicious in the connection between these parties, there was no responsibility on his part, which required that he should investigate the matter. New thoughts and fancies, new conjectures, hopes, and fears, passed into his brain; and he found himself busied in fruitless guesses as to the unknown, but, as he now believed, *fair* correspondent, to whom he was indebted for all the clues to his present inquiries.

Was she fair? was she young and lovely? and how, when, and where, had he awakened in her bosom the degree of interest such as her solicitude in behalf of his fortunes would necessarily show that she felt? He was bound to believe her both young and fair. Common gratitude required nothing less, and it gave him pleasure to believe it.

His interest in the unknown continued to rise—it had risen prodigiously within the last few days—and his fancy began to

frame a portrait of her to his eye, which might possibly become a fixed image in his heart. But of this Proctor had no misgivings. He felt grateful for the love which, unknown, had watched so faithfully over his fortunes ; and the sympathy which had been thus gratuitously shown, might, naturally, in the heart of one so much alone in the world, and so much assailed by enemies, provoke and deserve a warmer sentiment than simple gratitude.

It was while thus brooding over the services of the unknown damsel that our British major was suddenly, and somewhat roughly, brought back to more immediate interests by a stern command to halt, from unknown lips, and by finding the bridle of his steed in the grasp of an assailant. He looked up, to behold before him a sturdy forester, in the well-known blue hunting-shirt of the colonial rangers, one hand presenting a pistol, while the other bore heavily upon the bridle of his steed.

To clap spurs to his horse, to ride over the obstruction, and draw his own pistol from the holster, was the instant impulse of Proctor ; but his action and purpose were beheld in season for a warning, to which he was compelled to listen.

“ It’s useless, major. You’re surrounded. You’re a prisoner.”

The man’s tones were evil, but firm. His words were seconded by the appearance of three other persons in similar costume, each of whom presented his rifle as he drew nigh. The necessity was not to be eluded or escaped, and, submitting with a good grace to his captors, one of them led his horse by the bridle into the neighboring thicket. In ten minutes after, a similar party had taken like possession of the treacherous servant John. The whole affair happened within twelve miles of the city.

The captives were taken to the shelter of a dense forest growth which skirted the Ashley. Not a word was spoken during the progress. Proctor, staggered by the audacity of the proceeding, was yet comparatively resigned to the event. His mind was in a state which enabled him to look with something like indifference upon all the caprices of fortune. For the present, he made no inquiries, contenting himself with the reflection that the explanation would come quite soon enough.

He was permitted to throw himself at ease, where he would, among the trees ; and his horse was properly cared for by a negro groom whose face Proctor fancied he had seen before ; a conjecture which seemed to find encouragement in the broad grin that opened the fellow's countenance to barn-door dimensions, as he led away the steed. But the captive was permitted no words with him. He was vigilantly guarded, three or four riflemen constantly keeping him in sight.

Proctor was surprised at the numbers of these people. They were continually coming and going. He noted no less than forty different persons. All of them were well mounted and apparently well armed. The place had the appearance of being frequently used, as in the present instance, for the camp of the scouting party. The earth was well beaten by the hoofs of horses. The trees bore saddles and bridles ; the cook-pot smoked constantly with wild cheer of the woods ; and yet the whole party were within two miles of the Ashley Ferry road, then much more travelled than at the present day. Among all this motley and somewhat savage group, Proctor saw no officers beyond the grade of a sergeant ; but the utmost order prevailed in the encampment. It was while he lay at ease in the shade that he saw another captive brought in as he had been. This was his man John. But the British major did not recognise him, and the prisoners were guarded separately, and at no time allowed to come together.

At noon, dinner was served him alone, and he was waited on with respect by one of the foresters. He was well known. The man addressed him by name.

“ Who is your leader, sir ? ” was the question of Proctor.

“ He must answer that question for himself,” was the reply.

“ When shall I see him ? ”

“ To-night, I reckon.”

It was an hour after dark, when a considerable bustle in the camp announced an arrival. Meanwhile, a fire had been built among the trees where Proctor had made his tent, and a couple of blankets were provided him, with a thick roll of black moss by way of pillow. He had supped ; and while he lay at ease with his feet to the fire, meditating the novel phase in his for-

tunes, a group approached him of three persons, the centre and taller figure of the party, to his great surprise, being masked. They stood on one side of the fire, while Proctor lay on the other. The masked figure began the conversation with asking the captive how he had been treated.

"As well as I could wish, sir, my captivity alone excepted. Am I to understand that I am a prisoner in the hands of the Americans?"

"You are! You will be treated well, Major Proctor, and with proper respect for your character and rank. Indeed, sir, you need not be a prisoner a moment longer. If you will give me your word, as a man of honor, that, for one week, you will say nothing of this adventure, nor make any report of the body of soldiers you see here, you shall be free to depart with the dawn."

"That is impossible, sir. I can make no such pledges. My duty, sir——"

"Enough, Major Proctor! It will be my duty then to keep you safely, at least for a few days. It will be our care that you shall have no reason to complain of anything but your detention. Our fare is coarse, and the couch assigned you is a hard one; but you are a soldier, sir, and can accommodate yourself to such small inconveniences."

"I am content, sir. But, Colonel Walton, your voice betrays you—I know you!——"

"You know too much for your own safety," cried one of the officers accompanying Colonel Walton, drawing a pistol from his belt, with the words, and presenting it at the head of the prisoner. But for the timely interposition of Walton, the rash subordinate would have drawn the trigger. The piece was already cocked.

"Pshaw! M'Kelvey!" cried Walton, arresting his arm. "He can do us no hurt. We have only to keep him safely. Put up your weapon. Let me see nothing of this."

"You are too indulgent, colonel," said the other. "You will pay for it some day. This man——"

"At least, let us do no murder! Major Proctor, have I your word that you will not endeavor to escape, until we release you?"

This will be in a week, at the utmost. If you refuse, I shall only be compelled to subject you to greater restraint—in fact, to put you in irons.”

“I can have no objection to make you such a promise, Colonel Walton, in the hope to escape such ignominy.”

“It is then understood. Your range must be limited to the hundred yards on either side of your present place of rest. To attempt to pass beyond these limits will subject you to the rough handling of your guards. Good night, sir.”

With these words the party retired. Proctor, however, could still hear, as they went, the expostulations of the angry officer who had threatened his life, against the ill-advised mercy of his superior. He congratulated himself upon his narrow escape from a sharp and sudden death, and wondering at the nature of the enterprise which brought the partisans so near to the city garrison, he sank into slumbers not less grateful because of the rough couch assigned him for their enjoyment. His fortune was much better than that of his servant John. The treacherous spy was hustled across the river that very night, his wrists folded together with bracelets of iron, and a determined trooper on each side ready to shoot him down at the first sign of difficulty. Let us return once more to the city.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

GRADUALLY DEVELOPING

WHILE these events were in progress in the career of Proctor, society in Charleston was not wholly stagnant. The undercurrents, which represent the moral influences of the social world, were in sleepless motion; and the several parties to our history were more or less moved by their varying influences. The great ball at Cruden's was yet to take place, and was looked forward to with eager excitement, by hundreds of those who sought in society rather the passing delights than the substantial virtues which make society secure and permanent. The interval, meanwhile, was not unemployed by those who, without being able to emulate the splendor of the intended assemblage, were yet anxious to make some figure in the world corresponding with their proportions and resources. The days were, accordingly, consumed in *fêtes champêtre*, and the nights in lively reunions. Parties for Hadrill's, Sullivan's, James', and Morris islands, were of constant occurrence, and drives into St. Andrews', Goose Creek, Accabee, and other contiguous places furnished employment and excitement to merry groups to whom the question of the Benzonian, "Under which king, &c.?" never offered the slightest annoyance. These excursions were all taken during the daylight, for the autumn season, in the swamp regions of Carolina, did not suffer pleasure to sport with impunity along the water-courses, unless with the sanction of the daylight and the sun. At night, gay abodes in the city received and welcomed the butterfly tribes to whom life offered no aspects which rendered the economy of time desirable. Our excellent Mrs. Rivington had her "evenings" as surely as her

“mornings ;” and there were a number besides, who, if individually less frequent in throwing open their saloons, were sufficiently numerous to suffer no night to pass without affording a point of gathering for the light and motley multitude.

We will suppose some few days to have passed in practices such as these, since our last meeting with the conspirators at Mrs. Singleton’s. The occasions were studiously contrived by Balfour and his satellites to bring Katharine Walton into company. The policy of Mrs. Singleton encouraged her in yielding to this object, however little she may have relished it at heart. But two results were aimed at in the concession. It was only prudent not to offend authorities which had the parties completely in their power ; and quite as important, by conceding thus much, if possible, to divert suspicion from the secret toils of our feminine conspirators. Accordingly, Katharine Walton moved in a circle which in her heart she loathed, and received the devotions of those whose tributes revolted equally her patriotism and pride. But she preserved her temper in the calm control of her pure and proper thoughts, and if she was not all that her suitors desired, she at least afforded them no necessary cause of complaint.

In the meanwhile, she had met with and made the acquaintance of Ella Monckton. At first the two maidens were somewhat shy of each other. We are in possession of the sufficient reason for this shyness on the part of Ella. Katharine’s reluctance arose naturally enough : first, from the knowledge that Ella belonged to the enemy—was of the loyalist faction ; and, second, because there was nothing either in what was said of her by others, or in the *empressement* of her own manner, to enable her to fix or command the consideration or curiosity of our heroine. But circumstances, and occasional communion, served to break down the first barriers which natural restraints had set up between them. A word, a tone, a look will suffice, where hearts are ingenuous and young, to appeal to the affections and, very soon it was that, under a shrinking aspect, which the vulgar might consider pride, but which is just as likely to be an exquisite sensibility, Katharine Walton perceived that Ella Monckton harbored the most delicate, pure, and generous of na-

tures. On the other hand, Ella, somehow, felt herself, in spite of herself, drawn toward her rival, as by an irresistible attraction. At first, the language of her heart secretly said—

“I do not hate, but I fear her! She pains and distresses me, though she does not offend.”

Subsequently, it had another language.

“There is something very noble and commanding about this lady! She *is* a lady; sensitive, yet firm; pure and chaste, yet without any affectations of delicacy. She is gentle, too, and sweet, and there is a wondrous strength and melody, mixed, in the tones of her voice. I like her in spite of *him*; I like her, and feel that I, too, could love her.”

But there was a reserve even about the intimacy of the parties, which time alone could have broken down. Of course, Katharine Walton was not aware of any interest which she could have in the affairs of Ella; while the latter, on the other hand, was restrained by an ever-present fear that Katharine would decipher her secret interest in herself at every glance of her eyes and in the tremulous tones of her every utterance. The fear was idle. Katharine saw nothing in those eyes but the expression of a rare tenderness and delicacy; and heard nothing in her voice but a soft and touching harmony, which increased her interest in one in whom she never once thought to find a rival. But the parties insensibly came together more and more every day. The ancient intercourse between the widows Monckton and Singleton was gradually resumed through the growing intimacy between the two damsels. To spend a morning at the house of the latter was a not unfrequent thing with Ella; while Katharine was easily persuaded to take her work, or her book, to the house of Mrs. Monckton, and go into a sort of temporary solitude in the sweet society of the widow and her daughter, whither the crowd never came, and where she was seldom exposed to the annoyances which elsewhere invariably pursued her, of a misnamed gallantry, and a devotion which suggested nothing grateful to her fancies.

It was one afternoon, while Ella Monckton was on a visit to Katharine, that the gay widow Brewton joined the circle. In the constantly increasing round of her social progress, this lady

was usually put in possession of the latest *on dit* of the city. She had been that morning at Mrs. Rivington's, where it seems that Proctor, and his command at Dorchester, had been the subject of conversation.

"There is evidently a determination, in high quarters," said the widow, "to destroy that poor fellow, Proctor."

The heart of Ella trembled at these words.

"I suspect, Kate Walton," she continued, "that you are to blame for it all."

"Me! How? Why?"

"Ah! do not feign ignorance. Barry, and his eternal shadow M'Mahon, were both in full cry against him for his presumptuous admiration of you. It was charged that you are the cause of all his neglect of duty; and a great deal was said of a nature to lead me to suspect that great pains will be taken to establish the facts against him. But I did not so much trouble myself in relation to his case as to yours. The question was, in what degree you had given Proctor encouragement."

"I give him encouragement!"

"Come, come, Kate! Do not put on that sublime look of indignation. Proctor is not a person to be despised. He is one of the noblest of all these British officers, and, by the way, one of the best looking. A maiden might well give him encouragement without intending it, and might just as easily forget to shield her own heart against his attacks. Mark you, I do not say that such has been the case with you; but there were those present this morning, that did say so, and who brought forward a large number of proofs to conclude what they asserted."

"And what did *you* say?" asked Katharine, with a smile.

"Oh! you may guess. I asked, with no little scorn, if there was any one so stupid as to suppose that you were going to throw yourself away upon a red-coat; and I turned to Major Barry, and remarked in these very words; 'Undoubtedly, major, you are among the handsomest, the bravest, and the wittiest of all your crew—perhaps the very Magnus Apollo of the tribe. Now, pray you, think of Miss Walton, of her mind, her person, and, last and least of all, her fortune; then, be pleased to wheel about and confront your own image in that grand mir-

ror of Mrs. Rivington's. Having done so, and having brought all your well-known self-esteem to bear upon the question, then ask yourself what would be the amount of claim and attraction which you might urge, if seeking the hand of Katharine Walton.' ”

“ Oh, Mrs. Brewton ! ”

“ I did ; and, positively, a miracle ! The little fellow blushed ! Blushed, until nobody thought to look at the scarlet of his regimentals. And Captain M'Mahon, looking in his face, blushed also—by reflection, I suppose ; and for a moment the whole squad was silenced. But, with a sort of desperation, they renewed the fire, as much, it would seem, to please that brazen beauty, Moll Harvey, as with any other object. The argument was that you were quite too deeply involved with Proctor ever to escape ; that Balfour, accordingly stood no chance ; that whatever might be done against Proctor was to him a matter of perfect indifference, so long as his life remained untouched ; that he was already prepared to abandon the British for the American cause ; and that your love, of which he was secure, was sufficiently compensative for all his losses and privations.”

Poor Ella felt as if she could have buried her face in the earth—as if her heart were already buried there.

“ What a farrago of absurdities ! ” exclaimed Katharine.

“ Nay, Kate, upon my soul, I don't see that. I give you my word for it they made a very plausible story among them. Somebody did say something about your once having drawn trigger upon Proctor, as a proof of your dislike ; but the story was positively denied by others, and Proctor's own words quoted in denial.”

“ It was nevertheless quite true,” said Katharine, gravely.

“ True ! ” exclaimed Ella, with a convulsive shudder.

“ All true,” answered Katharine, with increasing gravity. “ It is one of those things of which I do not care to speak. I revolt at myself when I think of it ; and no doubt Major Proctor denies it, with an honorable disposition, to relieve me from the odium of having attempted such a crime. But it was in a moment of desperation, almost of madness, that the thing was done ; and having told you thus much, I must tell you all, by way of

explanation ; but I entreat you, Mrs. Brewton, and you, Ella, to keep the matter secret. My dear cousin, Emily Singleton, was dying in our house : her brother, Robert, was with us, concealed, a fugitive, about to receive her last breath. At that awful moment, Major Proctor entered the dwelling, followed by his troops. I arrested him at the door of my cousin's chamber, from which Robert made his escape by the window. Major Proctor approaching with the resolution to enter, though I had forbidden it, I seized one of my cousin's pistols, and fired, fortunately, without effect, for I had no aim ! I knew not what I did !”

A deep sigh struggled forth from the breast of Ella Monckton.

“Why, what a desperado you are, Kate!” exclaimed Mrs. Brewton. “I thought I had wickedness and wilfulness for anything ; but I never once dreamed of the possibility of my ever attempting to shoot down a British major. How did you feel, child, when you were doing it ? when you pulled the ugly little crooked iron they call the trigger ? when you heard the sudden ban ! ban ! and saw the flash ? Did you tremble ? Did you faint ? Did you not feel like going off into hysterics ? Bless me, you are, indeed, a heroine ! and how the thing was hushed up !—for the person—who was it ?—that mentioned it this morning, gave it only as a rumor, and was easily silenced !”

“It was too true ! I knew not what I was doing—this must be my apology. I owe much to Major Proctor for his forbearance.”

“And will you pay him with your heart.”

“Never ! never ! Let me tell you further, and thus silence *your* doubts for ever, Mrs. Brewton—I am the betrothed of my cousin, Robert Singleton ; Major Proctor can never be anything to me but a gentleman of worth, whom I very much esteem.”

Could Katharine Walton have seen the bright but tearful eyes of poor Ella at that moment ! With what a bound her little heart rose to her mouth, and fluttered there like some captive bird, deluded for a moment with a dream of escape from prison !

Mrs. Singleton entered the apartment at this moment. She heard the revelation of Katharine, and spoke rebukingly

“Katharine, my child, this should not have been told. It is our policy to keep it secret. If known abroad, it may be fatal to your fortunes. Bakfour’s forbearance is due entirely to his doubt of your engagement. He has, thus far, no reason to believe it. Let him suppose that the affair is irrevocable, and the commissioner of sequestrations keeps no terms with you, and you lose everything.”

“Be it so, my dear aunt,” replied the other; “but, believe me, I should rather lose all than deserve the reproach of holding out any encouragement to others, which may mislead.”

“You are quite right, my dear,” cried the widow Brewton. “I much prefer the manly course myself.”

“Nay, she is quite wrong, and *you* are quite wrong, permit me to say,” responded Mrs. Singleton, with great gravity. “You are only asked, my child, to keep a secret which peculiarly concerns yourself, and which nobody has a right to seek. In doing so, you hold forth no encouragement to others, so long as your deportment is that of a lady. The presumption which takes for granted its own merits as too potential to be withstood, must pay its own penalties, and is not particularly a subject of commiseration or concern. If these people assume your freedom, let them do so; if they presume upon it, there will always be a season to interpose and check them, either by simple rejection of their civilities, or by showing, if you think proper, that you are no longer your own mistress. In your present circumstances, there is no impropriety in that reserve which simply keeps from one’s neighbor a private history, which is especially one’s own; and every motive of policy insists upon the reserve.”

“My dear aunt, my secret will be perfectly safe with Mrs. Brewton and Ella.”

The ladies thus mentioned hastened to give their assurances to this effect.

“No doubt, no doubt, my dear; but without my warning, you would probably, under the same provocation, have revealed yourself in like manner to anybody else.”

“It is very like I should. I have been always accustomed to this freedom; and I confess to a feeling nowise agreeable in yielding to the reserve which you call policy, but which cer-

tainly seems to me to lead necessarily to false notions of one's situation."

"Not so; nobody ought to suffer because a lady keeps the secret of her betrothal. The gentleman who seeks a lady must feel his way cautiously. His first approaches, met properly by the lady, are his last, and there's an end of it. Everything depends upon herself. If she trifles with her situation, that is quite another thing. In your case, my dear, there can be no fears of this sort."

The entrance of another visiter changed the subject. Mrs. Ingliss, who now joined the party, was a genuine patriot, and at present under special annoyance. She had some of the more foppish of the British officers billeted upon her, among whom was the famous wit of the garrison, so often mentioned, Harry Barry, Esq., Major, &c. But the annoyance was not greatly regretted by her friends, since her patriotism enabled her upon occasion to turn it to excellent use. Keeping her own counsels, and studiously forbearing to offend the prejudices of the enemy, she inspired them with a certain degree of confidence, and they spoke very freely before her. By this means she gathered many items of intelligence, which found their way to our circle of female conspirators, and were by them conveyed to the partisans. Something was due to this lady, accordingly, and it became the policy of our patriots to afford every possible countenance to her mode of housekeeping. She visited the ladies of both parties, and they did not withhold themselves from her assemblies. Her present visit was to Katharine Walton. It was the usual formal initial call preparatory to an invitation; and the customary preliminaries being dismissed, Mrs. Ingliss solicited the presence of our heroine at her house on the ensuing evening. Finding Katharine hesitate, Mrs. Brewton interposed:

"Of course she will come, Mrs. Ingliss; we will all come. We know what is due to you, and we shall enjoy ourselves rarely with your lodgers. Barry, you know, is my delicate aversion. I approach him as I would Tom Singleton's monkey, with the mood to torture him into the antics, without which the beast has no qualities. We will come, of course."

Mrs. Singleton gave a similar assurance, and the consent of

Katharine followed. Mrs. Ingliss did not linger long after this ; and when she departed she was accompanied by the lively widow. Ella Monckton still remained, her heart filled with inexpressible emotions. She had spoken little during the conference between the parties, but her interest had been lively enough in all that had been said. There was nothing now wanting to confirm that warm feeling of sympathy which she had begun to cherish for the character of Katharine. That the heart of the latter was quite free in respect to Proctor—that there was no possibility that the parties should be ever more nearly connected with each other than they were at present—was a conviction too firmly established in her mind, from what she had heard, to suffer any future doubts or misgivings from that source.

The poor girl was, for the time, unreservedly happy in this conviction. When she was about to go, to the surprise of Katharine, she threw her arms about the neck of the latter, and passionately kissed her cheek. The proceeding was so unusual—so unlike everytbing that had hitherto marked their intercourse—that for a moment Katharine absolutely recoiled. But, in the next instant, as she saw the face of Ella covered with blushes, while her eyes, gleaming with a most unusual brightness, were yet filled with the biggest drops, she took the tender girl fondly in her arms, and returned her kisses with a tenderness only less warm than her own. She could only account for the unwonted warmth of her companion by giving her credit for a heart of very great sensibilities, which society had not yet tutored into reserve and caution. But the scene, almost without words, united the two maidens in a tie very superior to that which ordinarily brings persons of their age and sex together.

CHAPTER XXIX.

SWEETHEART AND STEED AT STAKE.

OUR scenes are required now to change with almost panoramic rapidity. The night of the day on which the proceedings of our last chapter took place was distinguished by a grand ball at the well-known dwelling of Mrs. Tidyman, in Ladson's court, then occupied by Biddulph, the paymaster of the British forces in Carolina, a person of showy and expensive habits, who lived in great style upon the profits—since vulgarly styled “pickings and stealings”—for which his office afforded him such excellent facilities.

The court was lighted up with great splendor, and every apartment of the house was filled to overflow. Hither came all the select of the garrison, all of the loyalists, male and female, and a very few of the whigs, but those only who were too timid to refuse an invitation which might reasonably be construed into a command. There was one exception, among those who did attend, to this general classification of the whigs present. This was Mrs. Brewton, whose talents for repartee usually saved her from any annoying assaults on the score of her patriotism, and who found these assemblages very favorable to her desires, which at once aimed to conceal her purposes, and to afford them opportunities. It was a profound policy which prompted her desire to acquire the reputation of a mere lover of pleasure; while the boldness with which she declared her whigism aloud was almost a guarantee to the enemy that they had nothing to fear from her secret machinations.

Here she met General Williamson, and, to her surprise, was

drawn aside by him from the press, and sounded upon various matters which only did not openly trench upon the actual issues between the parties. She observed that he was curious and anxious, and that, though possessed of little ingenuity in conversation, he yet contrived, through the very necessity in which he stood, to throw out sundry remarks, which, had she been disposed, might have conducted to an interesting *éclaircissement*. She had only to seize, with a bold assumption, upon one of the two susceptibilities contained in some of his equivoques, to have found the way clear to a complete development. So, at least, she thought. But, predetermined that he was not to be trusted, and loathing his character as she did, she availed herself of none of the opportunities which he really desired to afford her. It was while they spoke together, however, that a young officer of the guards, named Sadler, approached them, and, addressing Mrs. Brewton, mentioned that he was ordered to Camden, and should leave the city in two days. He politely offered to take letters for her to Mrs. Motte (her late husband's sister—afterward famous in story for confiding to Marion the bow and arrows by which her mansion-house was destroyed) or for any other of her friends in the neighborhood. She replied in her usual spirit—

“I thank you, lieutenant; I should very much like to write, but really I have no wish to have my letters read at the head of Marion's brigade.”

“Do you really mean, Mrs. Brewton, that I am in danger of falling into the hands of the rebel?”

“Would you have me prophesy more clearly, sir? The thing is inevitable. It is your fate. I see it as clearly in your face as if I read it in your palms. Persuade the commandant to send somebody else. His destiny may be otherwise written.”

Sadler turned off in a huff. But we may venture to pause in our narrative to anticipate the rest of the story. Poor Sadler was really captured by Singleton, of Marion's brigade; and, in two weeks after, he returned to Charleston, and called immediately upon Mrs. Brewton to thank her for his disgrace. He fully believed that she had contrived to convey intelligence of

his route and progress to the partisans. This event was one of several which finally provoked the British authorities to expel the lady from the city.

When Sadler had retired, Williamson, with evident eagerness, remarked—

“You speak with confidence of the whereabouts of Marion’s brigade, Is your confidence the result of shrewd guessing, or do you know——”

She interrupted him quickly.

“It is prophecy, sir. I am another Cassandra—doomed to tell the truth, and not to be believed when I do so. This poor lieutenant only goes to be taken. When I say so, I obey an irresistible impulse, which I certainly believe.”

“Ah! the days of prophecy are not ours! We should half suspect you of knowing well what you prophesy so holdly. Now, my dear Mrs. Brewton, it concerns me something to know how far you speak from a knowledge of the fact. It will materially affect my habits if I could suppose you knowing rather than prophetic. I propose, for example, to take my usual weekly ride, the next day, or the day after, into the country, and——”

He paused, and looked exceedingly sagacious and encouraging. She replied quickly—

“General Williamson, I do not prophesy for everybody. I can only say in your case that, should you be taken by Marion’s men, your chance of being kept long in captivity would be infinitely less than that of this beardless lieutenant.”

For a moment the significance of this answer did not seem to strike her companion. When, however, the full meaning flashed upon him, his face blackened to a thunder-cloud.

“Madam—Mrs. Brewton!” he exclaimed—then stammered and grew silent. He rose abruptly from his seat, and then returned to it, his features somewhat more composed. Looking at her with an earnest glance, he resumed—

“It is evident, Mrs. Brewton, that you do not know me. You still regard me as an enemy. You will do me more justice hereafter.”

“Nay, General Williamson, if you think that I do not desire,

from the bottom of my soul, to see justice done to *you*, you do not know *me*."

This was as bad as before. He turned away quickly, saying—

"Very well, madam, very well! But you will yet repent these expressions!"

She hummed gayly, as he went, the refrain of an old ballad then quite popular—

"And they bore away my bonny boy,
And they bore him away to the fatal tree;
Brief space they gave him then to pray—
But his latest breath it was breathed for me."

"Jezebel!" was the single word of Williamson, as he heard the words, and disappeared in the crowd. The widow saw no more of him that night.

Meanwhile, the dancing had begun, and the gayly-caparisoned knights and damsels whirled about the apartment, subject to frequent concussion with the densely-packed groups that looked on the while. Mrs. Brewton became the centre of one of these inactive groups; but it was no silent one.—The events of the evening had vexed others as well as Williamson. One of these outraged persons was the somewhat famous Archibald Campbell, better known as Mad Archy, or Crazy Campbell, a wild, reckless, harem-scarem soldier, who united a most irregular intellect to a most daring courage—if, indeed, we may consistently discover, in a deficient mind, the fine moral virtue which is described as courage.

Archy Campbell was famous for doing desperate things. He was vain, rash, headlong, and presumptuous, and much feared as a fire-eater. The arguments upon which he relied, in all discussions, were the bet and the duello. To stake life and money, equally, on his sentiments and opinions, was his favorite mode of proving himself right, and making himself so. He had his virtues, however—though, by the way, the former were not always considered vices or even defects of character. The women rather favored him, possibly because the men feared him. He was handsome and generous, and *kept a gig*, which was one of the most showy of all the garrison. To drive out a favorite damsel of an afternoon to the "Quarter" or "Eight-

Mile House," or beyond, to Goose Creek—making his trotter do his ten miles by the hour—was with him a sort of triumph which made him indifferent to the capture of posts or armies. His great ambition was social conquest. To come, see, and conquer, in a sense somewhat different from that of Cesar, was his daily aim. And he fancied himself always successful.

This easy assurance led him, on the present occasion, into an error in which his presumption was duly mortified. We have spoken elsewhere of Paulina Phelps, as one of the loyalist *belles* at that time in the city. She was a very pretty girl, lively and intelligent; her charms being duly increased in public estimation by the fact that she was the heiress to a very handsome fortune. Mad Archy was not so far demented as to be insensible to this consideration. He was accordingly her avowed suitor and constant attendant. She did not discourage his attentions, as she was not the person to be regardless of the devotion of a young, handsome, and high-spirited gallant. Whether she encouraged them beyond proper limits is a question. It is certain, however, that he construed her good humor and indulgence into something more significant. On this occasion, just before the dancing had commenced, and while she was interested in the conversation of a very graceful gentleman, one Captain Harley, who had recently arrived from New York, Mad Archy broke in upon the party with a bound.

"Come, Paulina, Miss Phelps," he cried; "your arm, they are about to dance."

The lady drew up, offended with this freedom, and somewhat disdainfully answered—

"You mistake, Major Campbell; I am not engaged to dance with *you*."

"Eh!—no!—what!" he replied, astonished. "Not dance with me!"

"No, sir."

"You refuse me, Paulina! You are capricious, Miss Phelps!"

"And you presumptuous, Major Campbell!"

"The devil you say!" cried Campbell, abruptly; and, turning with a rude stare to Harley, he cried aloud—

"Well! Let me see the man who will dance with you to-night."

At these words, with great ease, dignity, and self-possession, Captain Harley said—

“May I have the honor of being your partner in this dance, Miss Phelps?”

The lady, still smarting under Campbell’s insolence, instinctively rose and took the arm of the other. The action confounded Mad Archy, who, for a moment, knew not what to say. It was in this mood that he was joined by the professed mischief-makers of the garrison, Major Stock and others.

“Done for, Archy!” cried Stock, with a grin. “Clearly cut—made dog’s meat of, and no burial service.”

“I’ll punish her!” exclaimed Archy with an oath. “And as for Harley, I’ll teach him such a lesson as will cure his love for dancing from now to doomsday. Look you, Stock; you will take my message to him in the morning.”

“You will do no such thing, Major Stock,” said the widow Brewton, who had overheard every syllable. “If Archy Campbell will be a fool; with malice prepense and aforethought, as the lawyers say, there’s no reason that you should prove yourself an accessory, either after or before the fact.”

“’Pon my soul, madam, you are hold,” cried Campbell.

“What! to brave such a fire-eater as yourself? Look you, Major Campbell, if you are so totally without friends as to be able to hear the truth from none but a woman’s mouth, hear it from mine. Let me tell you that there is no extraordinary renown in being considered the madman, *par excellence*, of a very silly garrison of foot and horse. Remember, moreover, that no degree of folly and madness will excuse brutality.”

“Brutality, madam,” cried Campbell, fiercely.

“Even so, sir. There is no other word half so appropriate to our present uses. You have been guilty of a great offence against all the proprieties, and must not make your offence still more enormous. You have outraged the sensibilities of a lady whom you profess to admire, and have presumed upon those very weaknesses of her sex which should have been her securities against offence. You must not proceed farther—you *shall* not—in the same erring direction. You can not quarrel with Captain Harley, without adding still farther to this brutality.

He could do no less than he has done under the circumstances ; and, if you can not emulate, at least learn to respect his deportment."

"Upon my soul, Mrs. Brewton, you queen it most royally ! You say I *shall* not, and I *must* not ; but madam, suppose I say, in answer, that I *will* !"

"Why, then, sir, I shall only have mistaken the nature of the animal that I have sought to tame."

"Well, madam, and pray what animal was that ?"

"A lion, sir ; at worst a royal tiger—"

"Well, madam ?—"

"And not a bear—not an—"

She paused. He spoke—

"Not an ass, you would say !"

"Really, sir, your instincts are sufficiently good, whatever may be the condition of your wits."

"By Jove, Mrs. Brewton, you are too hard upon me ! But you have courage, madam, and courage is a virtue—and I like you nevertheless. But I can't submit to this ; and I beg that you will interfere no farther. I will shoot this fellow, Harley, or pink him—"

"No you won't, unless you really have resolved to give up the lady."

"How ?"

"Take another step in this business, and you lose her for ever. Behave like a man of sense and proper feeling, and if you ever had a chance of success you will certainly increase it. Go to her—seek your opportunity—become the penitent—show that you regard her feelings as well as your own—that you are prepared to sacrifice your feelings for hers—and you will make a more favorable impression on her than you ever made before."

He hesitated, and shook his head.

"Do you really love the lady ?"

"Yes, Mrs. Brewton, as the apple of my eye !"

"Then, do as I tell you, even though you should lose the apple of your eye. Proceed to bully her, or her present attendant, and, if she have any spark of feeling or of spirit, she will spurn you with loathing from her sight. Go, now, seek your

opportunity—do not despair if you make no progress to-night—better, indeed, not try to-night, but be sure you seek her and make amends to-morrow; and, by the way, it would be well to make gentlemanly terms with this Captain Harley—”

“Oh! by Jove, I can’t do that! but I thank you, Mrs. Brewton, for your counsel, I do! By the Eternal! madam, you have the soul of a war-horse; and I honor you, madam, though I’m afraid of you!”

“And *because* of it,” she answered, quietly.

Major Stock had heard the better part of this conversation though pulled this way and that by some old ladies who wished for refreshments.

“Well,” said he, when Mad Archy had joined him, “so the widow takes your case in hand. It will be well peppered. But she counsels rightly. You can’t call out this fellow Harley, who has only played handsome at your expense. You *will* run your head against it, Archy! It’s unfortunate. I think there’s no chance with the Phelps, after this! You’ve lost her, my boy, for ever.”

“What’ll you bet I don’t dance with her to-night?”

“Five guineas on it!”

“Done! Now for another; what’ll you bet I don’t marry her?”

“Fifty guineas against your trotter.”

“It’s an even go. Now look to it; for, as sure as thunder, I shall have both the girl and the guineas.”

“Get the one and you get the other,” cried Stock, and the parties separated, each seeking different avenues among the crowds.

CHAPTER XXX.

CARTEL.

THE equally restless and benevolent spirit of Mrs. Brewton was not satisfied to administer to mad Archy Campbell alone the counsels necessary to propriety. At an early hour, after the interview with him, she sought out the fair object of his temporary resentment.

"Paulina, my dear," she began, "you have greatly irritated Archy Campbell."

"Well, he deserves it," was the reply.

"I think it very likely; but are you prepared for all the consequences of his anger?"

"I don't see how it is to affect *me*."

"Well, in regard to yourself I can say nothing. I know not in what degree you are interested in him. It is very certain that he is greatly interested in *you*, and I much fear that any unusual harshness on your part will only drive him into mischief. I am afraid that he will force a duel upon this newly-come gentleman, Captain Harley."

"God forbid!" exclaimed the other.

"Let me beg that *you* will forbid also. I am sure, unless you are at some pains to be civil to your suitor, that such will be the event. You may be quite civil, and disarm his anger, without committing yourself in any way."

The result of the conversation, thus began, was satisfactory; and, whether Paulina really felt an interest or not in Campbell, she determined to adopt a course less calculated to provoke his irritable nature into excess and violence. The consequence of

this interposition was made apparent to Mrs. Brewton within the next half hour, when Major Stock approached her, with no little ill humor, and pointing to Campbell and Paulina, engaged in the mazes of the dance, said—

“I owe it to you, Mrs. Brewton, that I am five guineas *minus* to-night.”

Both Stock and Mrs. Brewton remained long enough to discover that Campbell was restored to his usual good humor; the behavior of Paulina being such as to encourage him in the highest hopes for the future. He had won his first bet; that was grumblingly acknowledged by Stock.

“But don’t deceive yourself,” said the latter. “You owe this only to the good nature of the girl. She saw that you were in a devil of a sulk, and knowing what a mad beast you are when in an ill humor, she was afraid that you’d be venting your fury upon her new favorite. Mrs. Brewton did this for you. I overheard her. But I shall have your trotter for all that. If ever woman was taken with a fellow, she is with Harley.”

“Do you think I fear him?” cried Campbell, exultingly. “I’ll have her in spite of all the Harleys in creation. Will you go another fifty guineas on it?”

“No,” was the reply. “I don’t know where you’d find the money. The horse will be loss enough for you at present—and the disappointment.”

With a great oath, Campbell broke away to escort Paulina to her carriage. He returned, after a few moments, in increased spirits, and in good humor with all the world—being particularly civil to Harley himself, whom he found conversing with Stock and others over the decanters. Harley was quiet, dignified, and reserved, in his deportment. It was observed that he evaded a good-humored remark made him by Campbell, contriving to answer somebody else at the moment.

“You design no quarrel with this man, Harley?” said Stock to Campbell, as they left the house together.

“No. . . Why should I?” was the response. “The fellow was right enough; and if anybody had cause of offence he was the person. I threatened all the world, and looked into his face while I did so.”

It was while Stock was busy over a late breakfast, the next morning, that mad Archy bounced in upon him.

"Look at that!" said he, throwing down a billet.

"Eh! by the powers!" exclaimed Stock, reading the billet.
"This is bringing the mill to the grist!"

It was a *cartel* from Harley. The tables were turned.

"Prompt and cool, eh?" said Campbell. "Who'd have thought it? The fellow has blood, that's certain."

"By Jove, yes! A positive demand; no sneaking invitation to the pacific. Well, what have you done?"

"Referred his friend to you. Major Ponsonbly acts for him."

"Then it is business. Well, what will you have?"

"The small-sword, and as soon as you please; but not within the next three days."

"How! It will get abroad. Why not this afternoon or tomorrow? The sooner the better!"

"All true; but I require two days, at least, for my marriage."

"Pshaw! are you so absurd as to dream of that?"

"Absurd! Do you suppose I mean to lose my trotter, or to forego your guineas? No! no, Stock! I shall have my girl and your gold, or hold me a spooney. After that shall Mr. Harley have his desires, not before."

"He will find his patience fail in waiting, if you hope for Paulina Phelps before you fight."

"Never you fear! Make your arrangements; but not to take effect before Saturday. I insist only on the small-sword. Make the arrangements accordingly—place and time, at his pleasure, or yours."

"Very good! You are only a shade madder than I thought you. Do you go to Mrs. Ingliss's to-night?"

"Where else? I dance with Paulina in the first quadrille."

"And her consent to this has led you to assume all the rest! What a vain dizzard you are!"

"Look you, Stock, get your guineas out of the pay-chest. I shall need them all in two days more. The money is mine, I tell you."

"Speak out honestly; has she consented to the marriage?"

"No; but I have!"

“Pshaw! Get you gone, and see Francisco at the guard-room. You may need a little exercise with the weapon.”

“Not a bit of it. I shall touch no sword, and think of no fight, until I am a married man.”

“Hark! there’s a rap. No doubt our customer. Begone!”

A servant entered at this moment, and announced “Major Ponsonby.”

“He’s prompt. That’s handsome!” said Campbell. “Good by, Stock, and see that you get the guineas.”

Campbell and Ponsonby passed each other at the entrance with a bow and a smile; and the former had scarcely rounded the next square, before the two seconds had arranged the meeting for the ensuing Saturday, at five in the afternoon, swords the weapons, the place a well-known grove, just without the lines, on the banks of Cooper river.

CHAPTER XXXI.

BARRY, AS A SCULPTOR.

THAT night both the principals were to be seen at the party of Mrs. Ingliss, as cool and happy as if their immunities of life were insured in the book of Fate for the next hundred years. It was observed that they treated each other with especial good humor and courtesy. But Harley bit his lip when he beheld his rival leading out the fair Paulina the first into the ring; and his vexation was not a whit lessened to perceive the smiling grace with which the damsel welcomed the attentions of her gallant. Mad Archy could not forbear, in the exultation of his spirit, casting a mischievous glance of triumph at his disappointed enemy. Harley saw and understood the meaning of the glance, and he resolved to be as merciless in the duel as his rival was in the dance. He soon sought his present consolations in another quarter of the apartment, and being as cool and courteous as brave—affecting, indeed, something of the *preux chevalier*—he very quickly joined in the measured mazes of the whirling parties, coupled with a partner whose bright eyes kept his own too busy to suffer him to see the happiness which he envied in his neighbors.

The scene of festivity on this occasion, the dwelling of Mrs. Ingliss, is yet conspicuous, a fine, airy mansion, scarcely looking so antique as lofty, in Queen street, directly opposite Friend, in the venerable city of Charleston.* It was illuminated for the occasion from top to bottom. The region west and north of it held but few houses, and an ample garden, in both these quarters, was richly lighted up also, cressets and lamps being sprinkled

* Now in the possession of Mr. William Enston.

quite freely among the shrubs and orange-trees. Beyond this garden, on the south, the view was almost unbroken to the river; a smooth esplanade spreading down to the green skirts of salt marsh which bordered the Ashley on the east. The whole scene was one of great beauty, and the soft airs from the southwest played deliciously among the chambers, in grateful unison with the moonlight and fragrance which surrounded them. The company was not in the mood to suffer these luxuries to escape them. They gave themselves up to unreserved enjoyment, or at least seemed to do so; the secret care at the hearts of many being hushed into repose, or disguised beneath that social mask which so frequently shelters the wounds of sensibility and the volcanoes of passion. The lower apartments and the piazza were yielded up to the dancers. The graver persons of the party were grouped here and there among them, as spectators, or congregated in the upper rooms. Some dispersed themselves about the garden, and love and sentiment, and mere humor and politics, found each some fitting place or subject for exercise.

Leaving the gay groups below, let us ascend to the front or southern apartment in the second story. Here we find Mrs. Ingliss with her more ancient guests. With these are Mrs. Singleton and Katharine Walton, both quietly seated, the latter with an admiring circle, small, but dutiful, in close attendance. Here was to be seen Colonel Cruden, as her guardian, dignified and complacent. Balfour, to the surprise of all, failed to make his appearance. Here, too, at intervals in the dancing, Major Barry was most obsequious in his service; and passing from chamber to chamber, the gay groups loitered with that restless feeling, a pleasant sort of discontent, which, perhaps, at places of this sort, furnishes the best stimulus to pleasure and excitement. We shall certainly not seek to detain the reader with such general descriptions as he may readily imagine for himself, but shall detach, for his benefit, from the events of the evening, such as bear more or less directly upon the progress of our history.

We have glanced at Major Barry among the guests. It must not be forgotten that the house of Mrs. Ingliss was his place of lodging. In the distribution of abodes for the British officers,

after the conquest of the city, he had been billeted upon her. This lady, as we have seen, was a good patriot; but she was treated civilly by Barry, and his harmless vanity, and almost unvarying good humor, inclined her in his favor. She rather liked him than otherwise, though she never spared her censure of his conduct whenever it deserved rebuke.

It happened, at one of these pauses of the dance this evening, that Barry drew nigh to the group about Mrs. Ingliss, with whom we found Mrs. Singleton and Katharine Walton. He was then officiating as one of the numerous *cortège* of the fashionable widow Rivington. Hither, also, drew nigh our other famous widow, Mrs. Brewton. Close behind her followed Captain M'Mahon, Barry's shadow, who was, or affected to be, very earnest in supplicating Mrs. Brewton for some favor or some act of forbearance. But she was obdurate, and broke into the circle of which Barry, though quite *pctite* of person, was the somewhat conspicuous object.

"Major Barry," observed Mrs. Brewton, "you must positively cut Captain M'Mahon."

"Fie! Mrs. Brewton!" implored M'Mahon.

"Why?" was Barry's inquiry.

"He is no friend of yours."

"I no friend of Major Barry! I am the only friend he has in the world."

"Heaven help him, then! The sooner he hangs himself the better. But I speak the truth. He has proved it to me most conclusively."

"And how, Mrs. Brewton?" was the inquiry of Barry, beginning to be quite curious,

"In striving to hide your light under his bushel."

"In plain terms," said Major Stock, "standing with his big head between you and the candle."

"Something worse than that," responded the widow. "We all know that Major Barry is both wit and poet. He is continually doing something very brilliant and grateful to Apollo. A true friend would be anxious that the world should be put in possession of these good things; yet here is Captain M'Mahon studiously suppressing them—"

"Which means," said Stock, "showing them to everybody under an injunction of secrecy."

"Precisely. Now this is treachery to one's friend and treachery to the public."

"To be sure," said Stock; "particularly as the friend knows all about it, and the world don't care a button to know."

"Oh, what a malignant!" cried Mrs. Rivington.

Mrs. Brewton continued—

"You are mistaken quite, Major Stock. The world *does* care to know. At all events, it should be protected from painful surprises. Now, if Major Barry's friend would honestly publish his good things in the 'Royal Gazette,' I could read them or not, at my pleasure; but when his friend makes me a sort of confidant, and forces upon me a secret, there is a double injury done to me and to the public. The possession of a secret, to a woman, is a sort of temptation to sin; and I will not be forced to keep that of Captain M'Mahon or his friend, Major Barry. Here, now, is a new epigram of the major's," holding up a paper.

"Read it!—read it!" was the cry from a dozen voices.

"Oh, don't!" appealed the author, in feeble tones.

"Oh, don't!" echoed M'Mahon, in tones quite as feeble.

"It appears," continued the widow, "that Major Barry has been honored with the gift of a pair of slippers, wrought by the fair hands of—— but that is a lady's secret, and must not be revealed by one of her sex. His acknowledgment for this gift is contained in the following very felicitous verses."

"Buzz! buzz! buzz!" went round the circle, Barry and M'Mahon both striving, but very inadequately, to increase the confusion.

"Oh, I won't read till we have perfect silence," said Mrs. Brewton.

And, with the words, our two Arcadians were the first to stop. With clear tones, and mock heroic manner, she then read the following—epigram, we suppose, it must be called:—

"To Miss Phebe ——, in compliment for a pair of slippers, wrought by her own hands:—

"Woman, of old, with wondrous art,
Was still content to snare the heart;

But now her more ambitious goal
 Is conquest o'er the very soul (*sole!*);
 No more, with *understanding* sure,
 Man walks the earth he ruled of yore;
 On humbler *footing* now he stands, —
 His *footsteps* taken through her *hands*.
 His *sole* (soul!) enmeshed, her happy snares
 At least protect from toils and tears (*tares!*)
 Nor all forgot her ancient art,
 Still through the soul o'ercomes the heart."

"Is that all?" demanded Stock, as the lady paused.

"All!"

"Certainly that mountain suffered grievously from that mouse!" cried Stock. "Positively, there should be some enactment, some heavy penalty against this cruel repetition of ancient puns. I am against you, Mrs. Brewton. If you can really satisfy me that M'Mahon honestly desired to keep secret these verses when he communicated them, then shall I aver that he was a better friend to Major Barry than Barry himself."

"Oh hush!" cried Mrs. Rivington. "You are too barbarous for a critic, Major Stock."

"Grant you, ma'am; but not too much so for a friend."

"Cynic!—but here come the waiters. We have need of cordials and comfits to take the bitter from our mouths."

And, with these words from Mrs. Rivington, the assault temporarily ceased upon Barry. The circle opened to receive the servants, bearing splendid and massive silver trays and salvers containing refreshments. These consisted of jams and jellies, pines, bananas, and other West India fruits, cordials and lemonade; and sundry more potent beverages for the stronger heads of the military. It would surprise a modern assembly, in the same region, to behold, in the centre of such a service, an immense bowl of punch, the chief ingredients of which were old Jamaica rum and cogniac, of nearly equal virtue.

While the gentlemen served the ladies, without finally forgetting themselves, the eyes of the company were directed, by some remark of Mrs. Rivington, to a good-looking young negro boy of sixteen, in the livery of Barry—a blue ground, with scarlet facings.

‘By the way,’ said the fashionable widow, quite abruptly, where did you pick up that clever boy, Major Barry?’

The question was so sudden, and Barry’s consciousness at the moment, so quick, that he answered confusedly—

“Me, Mrs. Rivington?—that boy—where did I get that boy? Why, I made him.”*

A solemn hush succeeded this strangely equivocal answer. The elderly ladies looked grave, and the younger vacant. A boisterous laugh from Stock added to the confusion.

“A better piece of work, by all odds, than the epigram. I should greatly thank you to make me a hundred or two of the same animal, out of the same sort of ebony.”

Barry had, by this time, recovered himself. The little wit found it necessary to put a bold face on the matter, and to exercise his ingenuity for his escape from his blunder.

“And there would be no great difficulty in the matter if you have the necessary amount of faith. Faith is the great essential. The fact is that, some time ago, happening to be in the neighborhood of Monk’s Corner, I thirsted for a draught of cool water from a neighboring brooklet. But I did not wish to wet my feet in getting at it, so I looked about me; and just before me noted a tract of the bog of the most ivory smoothness and as black as jet. ‘Now,’ said I, ‘will I see what faith will perform.’ I scooped up some of the earth, which was soft and pliant. I moulded it into the form and features of a handsome boy. I then devoutly concentrated my will upon it, and I said—repeating the abracadabra, and other potent formula of ancient magic—‘Rise up, Cæsario!’ and thereupon he rose, a good-looking lad enough, as you see him now, and quite creditable to me as a sculptor.”

“A round about way,” said Mrs. Ingliss to Mrs. Singleton, in tones almost audible to the circle, “of telling us he stole him somewhere near Monk’s Corner.”

“There’s no end to Barry’s sorceries. Captain M’Mahon, your friend needs a new title.”

* This answer was really given by Barry. The scenes of this story, which occur in Charleston, were mostly of real occurrence, as the parties were mostly real and well-known persons.

“Ah! What, major?”

“Henceforth let him be known as the Ethiopian Prometheus.”

The name stuck to the major for a long time afterward—certainly as long as the negro did.

A crash of plates and glasses interrupted the scene, and furnished an excuse to Barry for leaving the circle. His newly-created servant, Cæsario, not being bred to his vocation, had allowed the heavy silver tray to slip from his grasp, emptying the entire contents into the lap of the excellent Mrs. Smith, who, it was thought, had caused the accident by bearing with too much stress—under a mistake as to the character of its contents, of course—upon the punch bowl. There was great clamor, in the confusion of which, Katharine Walton, taking Ella Monckton by the arm, escaped into the garden. Let us leave them for a season, while looking after certain other interesting parties to our story.

CHAPTER XXXII

BRIGHT AND DARK.

WE left mad Archy Campbell in the full whirl of a most delirious and grateful excitement. Whether it was that Paulina Phelps really gave him a preference in her affections, or was afraid of giving provocation to his anger, it would not be easy to determine. Certain it is that she treated him with all the considerate solicitude of one who claimed a large portion of her favor. And, to do him justice, he now seemed properly careful to deserve it. His behavior was unwontedly gentle, modest, and devoted. He studiously avoided the language and manner of passion and excess. The coarse phraseology in which he was too much disposed, ordinarily, to indulge, was carefully made to give way to a dialect better fashioned to persuade the sentimental nature; and it really seemed as if the effort to appear more amiable had taught the lips of mad Archy an unusual eloquence. He was evidently laboring at an object—evidently to us.

It was doubtful if the fair Paulina beheld any other art in her gallant than that which should properly distinguish every lover. From the dance, he beguiled her to the garden, and she was pleased to be so beguiled. She forgot the more sedate attractions of the new-comer, Captain Harley, and, sitting with Archy Campbell in the subdued moonlight, which fell in softest drop-lets through the leaves and branches of the sheltering orange, the natural language of the occasion was of flowers, and hearts, and sentiments, all of the brightest and sweetest character. After much harmonious conversation, which seemed like musing and revery rather than discourse, Archy led his companion down the slope of the garden to a spot where the umbrage was

less close and massive. The green plain stretched away to the river, the lines which bordered the green marsh not concealing the bright and glittering mirror of the wave from the spot on which they stood. Beyond were the dense groves of St. Andrews, the great pines mingling with brooding oaks, and looming out, grandly solitary, in the embracing moonlight.

"Oh, how delicious is the picture!" exclaimed Paulina. "One feels anxious to escape to it, and be at peace for ever. I detest the crowd, this perpetual hum of tedious voices, that speak nothing to the heart, and leave us perpetually wearied even of our pleasures. Give me loneliness rather—give me the sad, sweet woods of autumn—the ground strewn with brown leaves, and the winds sighing gladly over their perishing beauties."

"And now is the time to see the woods in the very perfection of their beauty. I drove out the other day to Goose Creek church, and I was charmed into forgetfulness at every step. Suppose you let me drive you out to-morrow. I have the most famous trotter in the world, and my gig is as easy as a cradle. But you know them both. Take a seat with me to-morrow, and you shall enjoy the luxury of the woods in their fullest sweetness."

"I will!" was the prompt affirmative. "Do you know I've never seen the church at Goose Creek?"

"Is it possible? Oh, you will be delighted! The region is a perfect fairy land. But who comes here?"

"Miss Walton, the new beauty, I think, with Ella Monckton. Do you think her so very, *very* beautiful?"

"I might think her so if I did not find a much superior beauty elsewhere," was the reply, the gallant Archy looking tenderly; as he spoke, into the bright eyes of his companion. He offered her his arm at this moment; and they turned upward once more to the shelter of the garden and its protecting bowers; neither being in the mood, apparently, to receive any addition to their company. The spirits of Mad Archy were greatly increased; but he kept a strong rein upon his impulses. We may add that he never once, by any indiscretion of look or word, forfeited the favor which he seemed to have gained that evening, and the last words which Paulina spoke on his leaving her, as he es-

sorted her home that night, reminded him of the engagement for the morrow.

The eyes of Katharine Walton and her companion, like those of Paulina and her lover, were turned longingly to the fair stream before them, and the silent forests that spread away beyond it. They, too, had yearnings which carried them away into the solitude and from the crowd.

“Oh, how these woods recall to me my home! the sweet, safe thickets, the venerable shade-trees under which I played when a child, and where I first learned to weep and sorrow as a woman. Would I were among them still! I feel as if all my days of pleasure—nay, of peace and hope—are gone from me, now that I have left them. I feel, Ella, as if I were destined to some great and crushing calamity. My thoughts by day are full of presentiments, and by night my dreams are of evil always. Would I were away, afar, safe from all these bewildering sights and sounds, which speak to me of danger and deceit rather than of merriment or love!”

“And why is this! Why is it that you, young, and so beautiful, wealthy and so beloved”—

“Hush! hush!”

“Yes; why should you be unhappy?”

“Ah, you see not! You know not what I dread and what I deplore.”

“Indeed, I know not. Before me the prospect appears very bright. Yet a few days ago it was not so.”

“It is because you hope. I fear! You look forward. It is upon the past only that I cast my eyes with any satisfaction. The future wears nothing but doubts and clouds upon its face. God forbid, Ella, that it should ever seem to you what it now seems to me!”

“Ah, Katharine, *but for you*, mine would have been such a prospect.”

“But for me?”

“Yes! But I dare not tell you now. I must reserve the confession for another time, when I have more courage. You little know how much I owe you.”

Katharine expressed her surprise and curiosity; but, though

trembling to unfold her heart to her companion, Ella found herself unable to approach more nearly the subject which made her tremble. Thus musing together, and contrasting the bright and cloudy in their several horizons, the two maidens continued their walk until they were again shrouded among the groves of the garden. Here they paused, and seated themselves in an arbor sheltered by thick vines and the dense foliage of the lemon, the orange, and the gardenia. While they sat, speaking occasionally only, and then in such subdued accents as could reach no other ears, voices were suddenly heard approaching them, and entering an adjoining copse.

"It is Balfour," said Katharine, in sterner tones than was her wont. "Let us go to the house."

"Stay!" replied Ella, in a whisper. "We can not now move without being detected."

Meanwhile, Balfour and Cruden entered the grove, only separated from the two maidens by a clump of bushes of the gardenia and the rose. They seated themselves directly opposite, and proceeded to converse as if upon a subject already fully broached. Balfour, it may be said, had only just reached Mrs. Ingliss's. He had been delayed by business. His manner was still hurried, and his tones indicated some excitement.

"Well," said he, "of *her* we can speak hereafter. She shall not always avoid me! But what of your loving nephew? Have you heard nothing recently of Major Proctor?"

"Nothing. What of him?"

"Do you not know that he has disappeared?"

"Disappeared! I have not seen him for a week. He would take none of my counsel, so I let him take care of himself."

"That is right. You can neither serve nor save him."

"But what do you mean by disappeared?"

"He has left the city suddenly. Gone to Dorchester, it appears, where we have the last traces of him."

"How do you know that he went to Dorchester?"

"I sent his man, John, after him."

"What! As a spy upon his master?"

"How can you suppose it? But, hearing that he went off

suddenly and strangely, I thought it best that the servant should attend the master, and gave him permission to do so."

"Balfour, this was not right. You should give my nephew fair play."

"Pooh! pooh! It was only a measure of proper precaution. If I had been disposed to deny him fair play, he should have been closely in ward, well secured in irons, until his trial."

"And why has not his trial taken place?"

"For the very reason that I wished to give him fair play, and waited for the arrival of new officers from New York—persons who know nothing of the affair, and have no interest in the case one way or the other."

"Well, and what do you hear of my nephew since he left the city?"

"That he went to Dorchester, and made inquiries of old Humphries and Pryor in regard to the escape of Colonel Walton. It appears that he could get nothing satisfactory out of either of them, and the moment he turned his back they denounced him to Vaughan."

"You hear all this from Vaughan, and Vaughan is his enemy"

"Pshaw, Cruden, men are their own enemies. They will do well enough if they never have any worse than themselves. Dismiss this notion from your mind. The result of all is this, that Proctor left Dorchester the next day, and has not since been heard of."

"Indeed!"

"Even so! And this makes the case look worse than ever. My purpose was to put him on trial as soon as he returned to the city. The charges were all prepared. He has probably taken the only mode of escaping conviction."

"How! What do you suspect?"

"That he has fled to the enemy!"

Katharine Walton felt her hand convulsively grasped in that of Ella.

"Impossible! I will never believe it!" exclaimed Cruden.

"I am afraid you will find it true. The strangest part of the affair is that his servant John is also missing."

"Well, should that surprise you?" retorted Cruden, with a

sneer. "Is it anything strange that so faithful a servant should cling to the fortunes of his master?"

"Come, come, Cruden, that won't do. We know each other too well for sneers of this sort. There is no denying that John was in my pay, and I feel sure that we should have had his report before this but for the fact that he has been made away with. He has, perhaps, attempted to arrest his master in his flight, and has been shot down for his pains."

"Monstrous! What do you take John Proctor to be?"

"A traitor to his king and country, and a fugitive in the camp of Marion or Sumter! Such is the appearance of the case. Despairing of defence, he has fled, and has probably pnt to death my emissary."

"And rightly enough. The dog deserved a dog's death.

"Very like; yet *we* must not say this."

"What is to be done?"

"Nothing! Let him go. You will believe me, Cruden, when I say that I do not desire to bring *your* nephew to disgrace; still less to see him shot as a traitor. I prefer that he should fly. He saves both of us some shame and trouble. There is only one thing to be said. We must see that Katharine Walton does not escape also. She may or may not like him. I can not yet fathom *that*. But *he* likes *her*; and both together in the rebel camp, a mutual liking might not be so difficult, the fellow being good-looking enough, and—not unlike his uncle.

The smile which accompanied this sentence might have been a sneer. Balfour continued—

"To render this impossible, I must thrive in my own wooing, and you must give me more help than you have done. I have some plans by which to secure opportunities, of which you shall know hereafter. Enough for the present. Let us now go to the house. I must play the gallant, and do the amiable to her, with all the grace and spirit I can muster."

In silence sat the maidens till the two had walked away. Both of them had heard much to deepen and occasion anxiety.

"Do you wonder now," said Katharine, "that my future should seem so gloomy to my eyes?"

“No! no!” replied the other; “and my star has also grown dim all of a sudden.”

They returned to the dwelling, but only to endure two hours of mortal weariness, surrounded by music and revelry which inspired loathing only, and pressed with the attentions of those whom they equally dreaded and despised.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN THE TOILS.

ST. MICHAEL'S was just pealing the eleventh hour, when Major Stock opened his eyes listlessly, and, after a few preliminary yawns of more than ordinary duration, rang for his servant. The fellow had been waiting in the passage, and appeared almost instantly.

"Who has been here, Paul, this morning?"

"Nobody, sir."

"Have you seen Archy Campbell?"

"Oh! yes, sir; he passed in his chair more than an hour ago, driving a lady, and going off at full speed. He looked up at the windows, sir, but did not stop, and went by without a word."

"A lady! Hum! Who could it be?—not that girl, surely;—not Paulina!

This was said musingly, but the servant answered it; and no-wise to the satisfaction of his master.

"It was Miss Phelps, sir, I'm thinking."

"Well, sir, and what has your thinking to do with it; and who asked you to do any thinking; and what if it were Miss Phelps, sir? Do you suppose that riding out together makes them man and wife?"

"Oh! no, sir; not by no means, sir; I beg pardon, sir; I didn't mean to be thinking, sir; but it did look, sir, as if they was pretty thick together."

"Thick! do you say! Certainly, the plot seems to thicken! Can she be such a fool! Can it be that Fortune takes such pains to spoil such a bruin as Archy Campbell? I must see in it! I saw but little of them last night. I must—ah!

(yawns) Paul, get me the hot water ! That I should have risked my guineas upon the impossibility of a conjunction between a crack-brain and a chit !”

Major Stock was unusually rapid in making his toilet that morning. He scarcely gave himself time to discuss his toast and chocolate, when he departed on his rounds, anxious, by inquiries in the proper quarters, to relieve himself of his doubts with regard to the safety of his guineas. For the present, we must keep him and the reader equally in suspense. He learned but little that was satisfactory in relation to the matter, and the hour of *one* found him at the widow Rivington's, still urging his inquiries. He ascertained that Miss Phelps *had* ridden out of town with her suitor, but such drives were frequent enough, and no person seemed to attach any ulterior importance to the affair. Leaving him still in a state of much disquiet, and still at the fashionable widow's, let us take the road also.

Mad Archy Campbell kept quite a showy establishment, and his trotter, as he boasted, could show a clean pair of heels to any four-legged beast in Charleston. Paulina Phelps was quite as delighted to see him whirl like lightning over the sandy tracks, between the city and the Four-Mile Post, as was any of the spectators. Just beyond this point, the pair came up with General Williamson, jogging slowly, on horseback, in the same direction. The general was accompanied, or rather followed, by a couple of dragoons, assigned him by Balfour, as much, perhaps, by way of guaranty for his return to the city, as a guard of honor.

“Clear the track, general ;” was the cry of Mad Archy, as, with a wild flourish of the whip, he scored the flanks of his trotter, and passed through the opening files of the horsemen. The next moment he had left the latter far behind him. Gayly he sped from sight, leaving to the more soberly-paced Williamson to proceed at leisure to the Quarter House. Hither he came soon after, and, without looking at his watch, to see that it was legitimately twelve o'clock, he ordered a bowl of milk punch, and retired to a chamber.

The day was quite warm, and the general threw off his coat, and vest, his cravat, and sword, boots, and spurs, and settled

down at length upon his couch, having prepared himself duly for this attitude, by quaffing, at a single draught, one half at least of the foaming noggin which he had ordered. The residue was placed beside the bed, upon a small table, upon which lay his watch, sword, and cravat.

Meanwhile, his escort of dragoons were not unmindful of what was due to the comforts of the subordinate. Their horses were fastened in front of the dwelling, under the shelter of some China trees, and, by turns, the riders penetrated to the hospitable bar-room, satisfied with draughts of a liquor which, if less elegant and fashionable than milk-punch, was quite as potent. They strolled about the grounds, paraded before the house, lounged to and fro between their horses and the woods, and, finally, threw themselves lazily at length upon the benches which graced the piazza of the rude hotel, with a sense of luxury quite as lively as that of their superior.

Thus disposed, our vigilant dragoons saw but little of the world around them. It was not long before they were seized with a certain degree of drowsiness, to which the potent influence of the Jamaica which they had taken, the warmth of the day, and the slumberous waving of the foliage, shading the couches which they occupied, equally contributed to incline them. They did not know, or suspect, that, a few hundred yards below, and as many above, the Quarter House, there might be seen, stealing from tree to tree, and covering the road, as well from the city, as from Dorchester, certain wild-looking foresters, well armed with rifle and pistol, who seemed to be singularly alert, and who were gradually contracting themselves about the point which the two occupied so pleasantly. As little did they fancy that, closely harbored within the woods, not half a mile away, were fifty stout cavalry steeds, bitted and bridled, and awaiting to bear away, in fleet career, as many well-armed riders.

In fact, one of our dragoons was wrapt in a slumber quite as profound as ever hushed the cares of an infant. The other was not so fortunate, but was just in that condition, betwixt sleeping and waking, which leaves the sense doubtful of what disturbs it — which feels but can not fix the disturbance — and mingles the

real, which assails the external consciousness, with the dreaming method which employs it. A trampling of the horses at the tree, and the whinnying of one of them—an old dragoon charger, which took as much heed of all causes of disquiet as ever did his rider—at length roused up the half drowsy soldier.

He raised himself upon his elbow suddenly, and caught glimpses of a human figure, darting into the shadows of the wood opposite. This roused him, and, without waking his companion, he left the piazza and went out to his horse, which, with ears erect, and eyes keenly fixed upon the thicket in which the stranger had disappeared, was giving our dragoon as full a warning of danger as was possible to his vocabulary. Half dubious that mischief might be brewing, yet not willing to show unnecessary alarm, the soldier was meditating a call to his comrade, when his movements were decided by the sudden appearance of full half a dozen persons from the woods below, accoutred in the well-known blue hunting-shirts of the Carolina rangers. To disengage the bridle of his horse from the swinging limb to which it was fastened, to leap upon the animal, to draw the pistol from his holster and discharge it in the faces of the enemy, were all movements of a single moment, and in obedience to a single impulse. To shout to his comrade, and then clap spurs to his steed in flight, was the work of another instant. He saw that there was no chance of conflict; that he was about to be overwhelmed by numbers, and that his escape to the city was cut off.

He wheeled about, thinking of Dorchester; but, to his consternation, a group of rangers were approaching him rapidly from this quarter also. To dart for the Goose Creek road was the only remaining resource, and no time was allowed him for hesitation. Throwing to the ground the pistol which he had discharged, he drew the other, and, pointing it backward as he fled, gave free reins to his horse, and applied the spur without commiseration.

He was not instantly pursued; no horses of the enemy were visible; and, to his surprise, though he saw many rifles among his assailants, not one was discharged. There was a reason for this forbearance, which we may conjecture. He escaped, in the

direction taken some two hours before by Mad Archy Campbell and the fair Paulina Phelps. But he had not yet gone from sight before he saw his comrade in the hands of the rangers. The poor fellow, aroused by the shot of his associate, only opened his eyes to see the butt of the huge horseman's pistol, by which he was knocked down, descending wildly in the heavy hands of a man looking as savage as an Indian, and as well bearded as a Cossack. How had Mad Archy been suffered to escape, was the reflection of our fugitive dragoon? We may be permitted to say that it had been just as easy to have arrested the one party as the other. But the ambush had been specially ordered to suffer the lover and the lady to pass.

"He is not *our* man!" said one who wore the manner of a leader. "We must make no unnecessary alarm, lest we lose the object we aim at. Besides, this officer is protected by the lady. Let them go. If they stop at the 'Quarter,' we shall probably have to seize them, if only to make all things sure; and, if they go beyond, we are equally satisfied; they will be out of our way."

It was for these reasons that Mad Archy and his companion went by with impunity. Let us see to other parties.

We left General Williamson "taking his ease at his inn." But ease and repose on this occasion, and with him, did not imply sleep. His milk-punch had not produced oblivion. He was deep in thought and expectation. Events had been ripening with him for some time past. He had been in communication with Singleton, and now expected to meet him, still in the character of Furness. He had much to communicate, which was of importance to the partisans, and to the future objects of the continental army of the South; and his anxieties were in due degree with the sense of the weight of that intelligence which he brought, and which, in war, derives its value chiefly from the adaptation of the time to the tidings.

He was destined to be disappointed. Singleton's employments had delayed him in his purpose of meeting Williamson. It was a double misfortune to the latter that he was fated to meet with another of the partisans, who had no sort of suspicion of the new rôle which the general had assumed.

It was while Williamson was musing the condition of his own and the public affairs, almost as deeply abstracted from the world about him, in consequence of the pressure of his thoughts, as if he had been asleep, that he was slightly conscious of some disturbances without; but he gave them little heed. Soon after came a shot, the hurried tread of a horse, a struggle in the piazza, a groan, and then the rush to the interior of a score of feet. He immediately threw himself from the bed, and, in the same moment the door of the chamber was burst open, and the room instantly filled with a dozen rangers.

Well did he remember the costume. He had led a thousand such fellows on an Indian campaign. He had gained all of reputation that he enjoyed, while in the confidence of this people. He had deserted his trust, had failed in his faith, was now odious in the eyes of those who lately followed him with respect, if not admiration, and his heart misgave him as he beheld their swarthy faces, and dark eyes glaring upon him—arms in their hands, and he alone and almost weaponless. He had seized his sword as he leaped from the bed, and bore it, stretched nakedly and threateningly, with point to the intruders.

“Put down your weapon!” said the stern voice of a noble-looking gentleman. “It can be of no service. You are General Williamson?”

“I am, sir!”

“You are my prisoner?” was the stern response

“Who are you?”

“Col. Walton, of the state line of South Carolina. Give me your sword, sir!”

“Let me know first——”

“It is enough, sir, that you know that we are here, in numbers, able to put you to death in a moment; that your dragoons are taken, and that you have no alternative! What more would you know?”

“Do you not know *why* I am here, Col. Walton? Have you seen Col. Singleton?—have you heard nothing from him?—are you not despatched to meet me here?”

These questions were hurriedly put, and in husky accents. If Col. Walton indeed, knew nothing of Williamson's previous

conference with Singleton, the renegade was in a perilous case. He was in the hands of men whom he had abandoned; with the danger of doom at the drumhead for his treachery. The answer of Walton was equally prompt and unpleasant.

"Sent to meet you, sir! No! And how should I know *why* you are here—and what have you to do with Col. Singleton? Your questions are without significance in my ears, General Williamson. It is enough that you are my prisoner. I have planned this enterprise, solely, to take you prisoner. I had heard of your frequent visits to this place, and knew not that you had any deeper purpose in coming here than the enjoyment of such pleasures, as, it appears, you have not forgotten this morning."

The finger of Walton pointed to the empty punch-bowl. The face of Williamson was suffused. But his voice grew firmer.

"I will not yield, sir! I will perish first!"—and he thrust his weapon full at Walton's breast. But the other was not unguarded. His own sword was instantly crossed in air with the steel of the assailant; with quick strokes the opposing blades flashed above their heads, and finally lay together for a moment, lapped in a close buckle, until that of Williamson flew to the opposite quarter of the room. He was disarmed. He folded his hands with dignity upon his breast, and looked steadily in the face of the visiter, as if inviting the *coup de grace*.

"Secure him!" was the brief, stern command of Walton; and his subordinates rushed in. The captive was fast fettered, and conducted instantly to the opposite woods. He was mounted on a powerful steed, and escorted by two determined fellows on each hand. Walton then gave his orders:—

"And now, men, with all speed across the Ashley. If we delay, these woods will soon be too hot for us; not a moment is to be lost."

"What is to be done with Major Proctor?" demanded M'Kelvey.

"We must take him with us! we dare not let him off just yet. He would reach Charleston in an hour and alarm the garrison. Has the dragoon been pursued who made off?"

"He has Brace and Kirby after him. They will skirt the

road till sunset, if they do not overtake the fellow, and at least keep the officer and the lady from reaching town before dark. They have their orders."

"That will serve. We must push for the Edisto with all despatch. Take the head of the command, M'Kelvey."

No sooner said than done. Williamson was immediately sent forward under guard; while Col. Walton, bringing up the rear, once more penetrated the thicket assigned to Proctor, and announced the necessity of keeping him in durance a little longer. The latter was too much relieved by finding himself once more on horseback, to feel any great concern as to the route he was pursuing.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HOW MAD ARCHY CAMPBELL DROVE.

NEVER was heart of young damsel more free and buoyant than that of Paulina Phelps, while speeding over the deeply-shaded roads of Goose Creek, borne in a vehicle so easy, and by a trotter of such admirable speed and vigor. The day was a fine one; a little warm perhaps; but the heat was scarcely felt by our fair one, going at such a rate, a breeze playing around her as she flew, and mad Archy Campbell in the best of all possible humors. Never, in fact, did he so excellently reconcile his *riant* mood with so much grace and amenity. There was a reckless buoyancy in his words and manner, a playful humor, a wild but not irreverent freedom in what he said, that had an inexpressible charm for his thoughtless companion. She was, as may be supposed, a creature of extreme levity. She was playful and capricious, and somewhat wilful. It was one of her weaknesses to aim at being considered strong. Her ambition was to exhibit a strength beyond that usually accorded to her sex—a dangerous ambition always—which, perhaps, proves nothing more certainly than the real weakness of the party. But for this, she had never committed the indiscretion of taking such a drive, with such a gallant, and without any other companions.

It is possible that mad Archy calculated on these particulars; but it is just as possible that, in what he thought and resolved upon, his reference was rather to his own character than to that of the lady. He was just the person to conclude according to his own desires, without considering their propriety, or in what degree they might be acceptable to other persons. To *dare*,

where most others would be inclined to doubt—to *do*, simply because it was the opinion of others that the thing should not or could not be done—to startle the sober moods of thought or policy, with a splendid audacity—this was his delight, if not his ambition. He had conceived one of these schemes for achieving the impossible; his mind had matured its purpose, and, with a method, which always improved his madness, when his design had taken the shape of a will, he had made all his preparations.

This done, he was assured. He had no misgivings, either of his own failure, or of the defeat of his purpose, and, thus assured, there was nothing of moodiness in his words or manner. His mind was not one to brood upon its objects, however grave their character, or extreme the exigencies which they might involve. His conspiracies never kept him wakeful. You would suppose him never to entertain a single thought beyond the moment. Gay as a bird in summer, he was garrulous in a capricious utterance of the most sportive and thoughtless fancies, as if life had no object beyond the momentary flight or song. Such a random, headlong couple never sped away together on such a flight, and with so little seeming purpose, or with so little regard to the judgments of the considerate and grave.

They were soon beyond the range of Iazard's camp. Archy Campbell had his remarks in passing.

"Fine place for deer, that! I have hunted there frequently, and with success always. Went out last with old Stock, and killed a couple of does myself. Five deer were killed among the party. I roasted Stock that day, famously."

"Roasted him! How, pray?"

"Stuck him, that is to say."

"I am no nearer your meaning yet."

"How ignorant you girls are! But beauties are allowed to be so. *Roasting* and *sticking* are the most sensible words in a *better's* vocabulary. We bet on the first shot, which I got. I *stuck* him for two guineas there. Our next bet was on the first *bagging*."

"*Bagging!* And, pray, what's that?"

"Pshaw! I shall have to get you a sportsman's dictionary.

'To bag the game, is the proof that you have shot or captured it. I bagged my deer first, and *stuck* the old major there, also, to the tune of three guineas more. He lost every bet, and was thus *roasted, done down*, as they say of roast beef when it is *done up*."

"I declare you have the most mysterious mode of speaking. What now do you mean by *done up*?"

"'Pon my soul, you need teaching! Why, what should *done up* mean but *undone*? The sportsman's language is the most expressive in the world."

"It may be, when you can get the key to it. But it might as well be Egyptian for me! But, hold up; whose charming place is that on the right?"

"Charming! Pretty enough, but not absolutely charming in my eyes, unless, indeed, you were the charmer at the window, instead of that blowsabel you see there. That's one Daniel Cannon's—one of the rebels of the city, who forgot to count the cost of his patriotism before he adopted the expensive habit. That a man should adopt an unprofitable sentiment! He has paid for it! Have you seen enough of the charming settlement? My trotter, you see, has no sympathy with you, and is anxious to be off."

"Let him go. He is certainly a splendid creature."

"Is he not! What a skin he has! Did you ever see a more perfect purple bay in your life? It is like a velvet silk, only richer; and what legs!"—touching him slightly with the whip over his flanks, and shaking out the reins—"now shall you see him fly!"

"Nay, do not push him. The sand is heavy."

"He scorns sand! He is of the genuine Arabian stock, to whom sand is nature. How he speeds! and you scarcely feel the motion. What a pity to lose such an animal; and yet—"

"What! Why think of losing him?"

"Ha! ha! Paulina; to think that that heathen Turk, Stock, should have set his eyes on the beast, that he should hanker after such a creature, and really fancy that he was the man to get him. I'd sooner cut his throat, than he should have him; and yet—"

“Yet what?”

“We have a bet upon his performances to-day.”

“Indeed!”

“Yes! the trotter is staked against a purse of guineas; fifty yellow hammers against my purple bay! Which shall fly, Pauline? The birds or the beast? Eh! It would be a pity to lose such a creature.”

“I would not lose him for the world.”

“What would you do to keep him?”

“What would I *not* do?” answered the lady.

Mad Archy chuckled, and with a sly glance at his companion—

“I must win the bet, of course!”

“Surely; if you can!”

“Ah! there’s the rub! *If I can!* I must do my best for it—leave no means untried for it—eh?”

“Certainly not!”

“Leap, fly, overturn fences, break through farm-yards, laugh at the laws, if necessary, the church?—”

“All! all!” cried the gay damsel, with a merry laugh; “anything rather than lose so beautiful and fine a horse. But you have not told me what the bet is? There is no secret about it?”

“Ah! but there is!—for the present at least; but you will be the first to know it, I assure you. I am resolved to win it, and will! If I had entertained any doubts before, your encouragement has settled them. But I may call upon you for assistance. Indeed, to confess the truth, the bet is of such a nature, that, without your help, I shall lose it. May I count upon you?”

“Oh! to be sure! But you rack me with curiosity. How can you do so? Do you forget that I am a woman?”

“Heaven forbid! It is as a woman only that your assistance will be valuable. But, rest in patience for a season. In truth, the secret will be worth nothing to you at present. It is one of those which can have no interest, but in the moment of its discovery; and that discovery, I promise you, shall be first made to you.”

“And to-day?”

"Before the day is out; nay, possibly, in the course of a very few hours. But here is Garden's. You know the doctor and his place, 'Otranto'?"

"Yes; shall we stop?"

"By no means! we should suffocate! Don't you suffer, at this distance, from the perfume of his favorite flowers—to which his name is given—the Gardenia?"

"I see none of them."

"But you scent them?"

"I can't say I do."

"It don't matter, we are safely past. Go it, Turcoman—go it, Arab! You know not (but you should know, O! most royal beast) what a burden of beauty it is that you carry! You know not, oh! bird-eyed deserter, that upon your legs depends the happiness which you enjoy, in the possession of such a master; nay, the happiness which your master enjoys in the possession of such a beauty. You shall help him to get more exquisite joys, my sleek-skinned Arabian! This day shall be marked with a white stone in our calendar! You shall feed on silver oats hereafter; you shall sleep in a stable of swan's down; and there shall be a page, night and morning, to sprinkle you with rose-water, ere you come forth, as a fleet hippogriff, bearing the lady of my love to pleasure."

Speaking this extravagance, which he concluded with a wild whistle, our harem-scarem cavalier touched gracefully and lightly the purple flanks, now slightly flecked with froth, of the high-spirited animal; who went off with increasing impulse at an application which rather showed than enforced the desire of his master.

"Why, you are quite poetical!" exclaimed Paulina.

"Should I be otherwise? I have a champagne exhilarance working in brain and bosom! I feel that I have wings. I am on my way—better mounted than ever was Mahomet, when he rode Alborak, the mule—to something more certain to give me happiness than any of his seven heavens! And did you note that my noble Arabian understood every word I said?"

"I can't say that I did!"

"Indeed; where could you have been looking all the while?"

Did you not see how he threw up his head; how his ears were erected; with what an air he set down his feet, and stepped off as if he knew there was nothing but air to receive him? He understood me, be sure, every syllable; and that whistle which I gave"—here he repeated it—"do you see what a glorious bound he takes, as if with the view to leaving the shafts behind him? But he shan't do that! How we spin—how we fly—even as the fairies do! Do you believe in fairies, Paulina?"

"To be sure I do! Not your masculine fairies, they are too coarse a creature. Your Oberon is a sort of monster, for example;—but I have no doubt about Titania, and Loline, and Nymphalin, and the rest of the tender sex. I would not give up my faith in the *female* fairies for all the world."

"As if these could be tolerable, even to themselves, without a just proportion of the other sex! How we go! That I should give up such a horse as this! It was a great rashness to make such a bet; but, with your encouragement, Paulina, may I be utterly consumed in bitumen, if I lose him! You say I shall not—and I *will* not. Paulina, you do not know me."

"What do you mean? I know that you are Mad Archy Campbell!—"

"Ah! but not *fou* Archy Campbell! You shall see! You know me! Well, I suppose you do, in some respects. You know me as your most devoted worshipper. That I take for granted; but you little know that I can set fire to the very temple in which I worship! By Jupiter Ammon, to employ Balfour's most expressive oath, I am capable of a devilish sight of things of which you have no conception!"

"You wish to scare me, do you? But you're mistaken. I know enough of you to fear you nothing!"

"Ah! Eh! Do you say so! Well, do you see that hog trying to make his way into that cornfield? a huge beast, such as they would have hunted with dog, and cry, and bow-spear, in the forest of Ardennes. You see how he rears himself against the fence, absolutely bent to send it down by mere force? Now shall you see me put one of these wheels over his back before he or you can cry out—'Cha!'"

“For Heaven’s sake, Archy Campbell, don’t think of such a thing! Do you see the ditch? We shall be upset.”

“Not a bit of it! Through the ditch we go! Ha! Smack!” and the whip was now laid on with unction. “Bravo! beast of mine; across him for a thousand!”

A jolt—a bound—the ditch is crossed, and, even while the hog, with forefeet erect, is pressing all his weight against the worm-fence, which he had already half shaken from its propriety, the obedient horse took the irregular motion which had been prescribed to him, and the vehicle rose in air, upon the hog’s quarters, and hung in this manner for a perilous instant. A scream from the lady was nothing to the wild succession of screams that issued from the throat of the porker. Down rolled the beast into the ditch; down, for an instant, settled the wheels upon him; another jolt of the vehicle, and the ditch was re-crossed; the wheels recovered their balance, and off bounded the good Arabian, seemingly as heedless as his master, of the condition of the hog. Before Paulina had recovered, Mad Archy spoke:—

“By Jupiter Ammon, it was almost a hang! I knew that there was some peril in it from the first, Paulina, and but for your assurance that nothing could scare you, I should never have tried it. You are a fearless creature—not once to cry aloud—not once to tremble.”

Then, looking round with a mischievous smile, into her face—“Not the slightest change in your color or feature! Ah! Paulina, you are worthy to be a soldier’s wife. *You have* courage, indeed!”

This novel sort of flattery did not soothe the lady very materially. If not absolutely scared, she was bewildered and confounded. She felt that a mocking devil was in the smile which beheld her features. She knew that they were pale. She felt that her heart and lips were equally trembling. She knew that she had screamed in her momentary terror, and was as perfectly satisfied that he had heard her scream. She spoke nothing. She began now to feel all the imprudence of which she had been guilty in riding with such a companion. Was he mad or not? He was rapidly, to her mind, realizing the propriety of

the epithet which had hitherto been conferred upon him in jest. His recklessness was assuming an aspect quite as uncomfortable, to her, as his madness would have been. He did not allow her apprehensions to subside.

“You say nothing, Paulina? Perhaps, you wonder that I should suppose it a meritorious show of courage, on your part, to feel no fear at such a small adventure. But I can assure you that most of your sex would have felt or expressed some alarm. You do neither. Ah! it is delightful to drive such a woman! One is annoyed at the petty feminine fears which see danger in a straw. Now, do you see yonder pines growing upon the old track? I’ll venture a guinea that there is scarcely a lady in Charleston who would not be disquieted at my driving between them!”

“For Heaven’s sake, sir, do not attempt it!” cried the damsel, now seriously alarmed, and all over in a tremor, catching his arm as she spoke.

“Ah! child Paulina, this apprehension is expressed for me! You feel none yourself. You dread that I will falter at the proper moment, and disgrace my driving. But I will show you that I am as cool and firm of nerve as you are. I have been through that grove before! I led the way for Barry and M’Mahon. I drove old Stock, and the old fellow hadn’t a word to say! By that I knew his nerves were disquieted. We went through at a bound. We measured it afterward, and there was but an inch to spare on each hand. Then I shouted to Barry to come on; and he did—after a fashion! He soon saw sights! The trees, he swore, came out into the path. The left wheel struck, locked, was torn out, and ran a hundred yards, more or less. Barry went out on one side, as if making his way to Cooper river; while M’Mahon, for the first time taking a different direction, bounced upward, on his way to Dorchester. We picked them both up with bloody noses. Ha! Smack! Turcoman! Now for it, and oh! villain, if you swerve under the riband, I’ll roast your flanks for you!”

{ With a long whistle, our Jehu gave the animal the whip threw his head forward, slightly increased his grasp upon the reins, and, in a moment, Paulina was conscious of the passage

between the trees. The wheels rolled on a root, and the slight shock, in her nervous condition, persuaded her that the vehicle had gone to piéces. A deep sigh escaped her, and when Archy looked round upon her face again, with that half diabolic smile, the madman felt that he had conquered. She was powerless. The lustre had left her eyes. Her cheeks were pallid! The gaze with which she met his own, was that of a subject. The fair coquette, so boastful of her strength and courage, was absolutely speechless; but she could still appreciate the danger of a philosophy so wild as that with which her companion continued to regale her senses.

“Talk of driving!” said he. “There’s no driving where there’s no danger! Where’s the merit of doing that? A cat may drive a blind horse over a beaten track, and safely keep the centre; but it is a man only that can scrape the edge of a precipice with his wheel, yet never cease to whistle while he’s doing it! I could take you now, Paulina, full speed, among all the tombs and vaults of the Goose Creek churchyard, chip the corner of every tombstone, whirl three times round the church, leaving but an inch to spare between the corners and the wheels, and haul up at the altar place, cool enough for the marriage ceremony! There’s the church, now!”

And he touched the flanks of the trotter with his whip, and began to whistle.

“Oh! for Heaven’s sake, Mr. Campbell, don’t think of it.”

The poor girl found her voice in anticipation of new and greater danger.

“Don’t think of what?” he demanded.

“Driving among the tombstones. It can’t be done with safety.”

“Can’t be done! What will you bet on it? I’ll show you. Such an imputation on my skill in driving! Ah you think I fear? You would test my courage—my nerves—in every way! You are a fearless creature; but you shall see that I have as firm a heart as yourself.”

“Oh! I do not mean that, Mr. Campbell. I am not firm. I am fearful—very fearful. In fact, I feel quite sick. I must have some water.”

“It is this cursed beast! He goes so slowly! He creeps as if he had the gout! We have been a tedious time on the road, and you are naturally tired out. I could cut the rascal’s throat. Water! we will get it at the parsonage. We will drive there first; after that we can visit the church. It is one of the prettiest of the antiquities in all the low country. Fine tessellated aisles—fine mahogany pews—carved work in abundance, and—but,” looking round upon the pale face of his companion, “but for the parsonage, now! You know the rector, Ellington?”

“Oh! yes, yes! go to the parsonage.”

“Phew!”—a shrill prolonged whistle, and artistlike flourish of the “persuader,” as he styled his whip, and the vehicle was soon whirled up at the door of the parsonage.

CHAPTER XXXV.

HOW MAD ARCHY CAMPBELL WON HIS BRIDE.

It is probably very well known by our readers, that the establishment of the English church was that which generally prevailed before, and during the Revolution, throughout all the *parish* country of South Carolina. Hence, indeed, the *parochial* divisions which exist in the same region to this day, occasioning something like a political anomaly in the distribution of civil power throughout the state. The church establishment, at that period, was a highly respectable one. Great Britain had a reasonable sense of what was due to externals, at least in matters of religion; and the temples which she raised for worship were strong, fair-proportioned brick fabrics. Good dwellings, near at hand, were provided for the rectors, and the incumbent was usually one of those "sleek, oily men of God," who show themselves duly sensible of the value of an arrangement which so happily unites the state with the church.

In South Carolina, the English church was probably quite as well served by its priests as in any other of the colonies—perhaps better than in most. It possessed a very fair amount of education, talent, and good manners. The reverend Edward Ellington, the rector at Goose Creek, was a very respectable clergyman—a man of good looks, easy, pleasant address, and fair ability. There are those living who have listened to and been greatly edified by his preaching. As far as we can learn, though an honest man, and laboring properly in his vocation, he did not suffer his zeal to distress his nervous system—was of a gentle and easy disposition—not at all favorable to martyrdom;

and, probably, was much more accessible to turtle-soup and Madeira.

We do not blame him for this. Men must live and toil according to the endowments of their nature. The phlegmatic temperament may be united to a very excellent head and a good Christian disposition, without feeling at all anxious to enjoy the distinctions of John Rogers; indeed, without any feverish zeal to vex and goad their neighbors into the way of peace. Mr. Ellington was a priest after this order. He was mild and meek, and indulgent; no fierce reformer; and perfectly satisfied with a flock which betrayed the least possible distrust in regard to their situation as well as his own. It was seldom that flock or pastor disturbed the quiet of one another, or suffered from any spasmodical excitements to which they could give the name of religion. Whether they were worse or better than their neighbors, in consequence of this easy mode of encountering the flesh and the devil, is a question which it does not become our province to discuss.

Our pastor was taking his ease on the shady side of his piazza as Mad Archy Campbell and the fair Paulina drove up to his entrance. The shade-trees received them, and a servant in a neat livery promptly made his appearance, to whom Campbell threw his reins; then, jumping out with an easy bound, he assisted his companion, trembling all the while, to the solid earth, her heart beating almost audibly with the sense of a danger hardly yet escaped. The worthy pastor arose from the cot of canvass, on which he had been soliciting his siesta, and partly descended the flight of steps leading to the piazza, to receive and welcome the parties, both of whom he slightly knew.

With a somewhat boisterous courtesy Mad Archy responded to the gentle salutation of the rector, who, giving his arm to Paulina, assisted her into the dwelling. She sank feebly into the first chair that presented itself in the piazza, and faintly called for a glass of water, which was immediately brought. Mr. Ellington soon perceived that her nerves were somewhat discomposed, but he was too phlegmatic to conjecture the full extent to which they had been tried. Besides, Mad Archy gave him little leisure for meditation or scrutiny.

"We are out of breath, parson! Such a horse! Look at the creature! Hardly ruffled; never a stain upon his skin; and just enough moisture to increase the beauty of his purple. You'll hardly think it, but we have reached you in less than two hours from the city."

The preacher looked incredulous; turning his eyes from one to the other of his visitors, with a doubtful inquiry in his glance.

"By Moses and Aaron, parson, but what I tell you is the truth," was the irreverent response. The rector looked a becoming gravity as he replied—

"Swear not at all!"

"Oh! psho! Parson, you don't call that an oath? I only appealed to such witnesses as I thought you might believe in. Now Moses and Aaron ought to be good evidence with you, and if you have any mode of communicating with them, you can soon learn that what I tell you is solemn, hard-favored fact. Don't you see that Miss Phelps has not yet recovered breath. In truth, we flew rather than rode. It is a beast among a thousand, that of mine! Pity to lose such a beast, eh, Paulina? But you say we must not lose him, and we will not. Parson, if you have no objection, we will let him pick from that grass plat on the left; there, under those oaks, where he will find both shade and substance."

The rector was evidently bewildered by his visitor, but he consented to the arrangement; and, with a few words to the ostler, the horse was stripped of his furniture. In the meanwhile, ranging the piazza with the air of Sultan Solyman, Mad Archy divided his attention between the rector, the lady, and the Arabian. The gig was suffered to remain beneath the shade trees at the entrance.

"You have a world to yourself, Mr. Ellington," was the condescending remark of Campbell. "Can be happy here as the day is long. But your world would not suit me. Peace is not my element. Repose does not refresh me. I prefer a storm any day to a calm; and if I were doomed to such a life as yours, I should burn down the parsonage first, and then the church, if it were only to have the trouble of rebuilding them. Did you ever in your life enjoy a bit of fun, parson? Were you

ever in a row? When you were a boy, for example, did you ever knock down a watchman, or upset his box?"

"Never, sir," said the parson meekly.

"At college, however, you have taken the road as a whip? You have rode steeple chases;—you have torn off the gown of an official, of a dark night, and met his eyes innocently in the morning?"

"I am glad to say that I have never done any of these things."

"Glad to say? I don't see why it should make you glad! But you are fond of cards, I am certain."

"I acknowledge that I find pleasure in a rubber of whist, with shilling points."

"Shilling points! Silver! There is no dignity in such play. What think you of fifty guineas on a cast?" Then, without waiting for an answer: "Now, pray, look at that beast of mine. His fate depends on his and my performance to-day. He has done his part thus far, with very excellent success. I must not neglect mine. Do you know Stock, Major Stock, Mr. Ellington?"

"I do not, sir."

"The last man in the world to do justice to a horse like that! It is barely possible that he thinks to own him. He has put fifty guineas on his head; and it will soon be certain whether he or I shall have the felicity of flinging the ribands over him hereafter. This day will decide it. That warns me that no time is to be lost. Paulina, my love, you have said that we must not lose the horse; and you are right! Pray, rise, my charmer. Parson, we have come to be married; will you make the ceremony as short as possible? We must take our dinner in town to-day!"

The parson looked more bewildered than ever. The lady stared aghast, her eyes ranging from one to the other gentleman. Both the persons addressed were silent. Campbell grew impatient.

"Zounds! parson—don't you hear?—don't you comprehend? we are come to be married."

"Are you serious, Mr. Campbell?"

“Serious! Do I look like the man to jest when my happiness is at stake? Is not happiness one of the most serious interests in this life? Have we ridden up to you for any less object? I tell you, sir, that Miss Paulina Phelps and myself have come hither to be married. We know the pleasure that you feel in bringing hearts together, and we entreat this office at your hands. Will you not rise, my Paulina? I know that you are fatigued, but the church requires that we should be married in a standing posture, with head uncovered; unless, indeed, one is too sick to rise, and suffers from a bad cold; then some allowance is made for the suffering party. But we can make no such plea. Come, sweetheart! It will occupy but a few moments.”

The lady remained seated and silent, but looked more terror-stricken than ever. The rector beheld the expression of her face, and it suggested to him the answer to Campbell's demand.

“I will cheerfully marry you,” he said, “if the lady consents to it.”

“If the lady consents to it! And what right have you to suppose that the lady will not consent to it? For what purpose has she come hither? Do you question my word? Should I not know? What! She says nothing herself! Well, sir, and does not a lady's silence mean consent? Are you capable of making no allowance for the delicacy of feelings which would rather have you understand them, without absolutely forcing the tongue to speak! Sir, I'm shocked and surprised at you. Learn better, hereafter, how to appreciate the nice feelings of the sex.”

“But, sir—Mr. Campbell——”

“No unnecessary words, Mr. Ellington—we are in haste. We must be in town for dinner. The sooner, therefore, you officiate, the better. We are both of marriageable years, and should know what we desire.”

“You speak for yourself, Major Campbell.”

“Zounds, man, I speak for the lady also.”

“She does not say *that!*” turning and looking at Paulina. The poor girl caught his hand and looked appealingly into his face.

“But she says nothing against it,” replied Campbell.

“That will not suffice, Major Campbell. She must speak for

herself!" replied the rector, taking an accent and aspect of more decision.

"Ha! do you say that!" exclaimed Campbell, in subdued tones, his eye resting upon the face of the pale and trembling Paulina—"Do you say that? You are not satisfied with what I tell you! Now, by Jupiter Ammon, you marry us instantly, or I will blow your brains out! It is an oath!"

With these words drawing a pair of pistols from his coat, he clapped one of them to the head of the rector, cocked it quickly, and repeated the oath.

"We are come hither to be married! Either you marry us, or I put a brace of bullets through your brains. Paulina, fear nothing, my love; he shall do as I command. I will sooner shoot both of us, than see you disappointed."

Ellington looked into the face of the madman, and read there a degree of desperate resolution, under which his firmness succumbed. He had met the eyes of a master. He felt that the person with whom he had to deal was capable of any excess or violence. He reasoned rapidly with himself under the exigency of his situation.

"It is true," he said, "that the lady seems paralyzed with terror, and evidently appeals to me for protection from this man; but why has she intrusted herself to him! Unless marriage was her purpose, why consent to such a hair-brained expedition as the present—one which should seriously involve her reputation? To perform this office will really be to save this reputation; and if the lady does not know her own mind, it is high time she had somebody to teach her all necessary lessons in future."

Such were the rapid conclusions of the rector, under the coercive terrors of Campbell's pistols. The latter gave him but little time. He saw that the parson was alarmed and prepared to yield. He had no doubt of the pliant nature of the lady.

"Hark ye, Mr. Ellington, I am willing to reason with you, even though I shoot you. Shoot you *I will*, and shoot her, and shoot myself, rather than go back to the city to be a finger point for every d——d blockhead in the garrison! Now, look you, to what is the common sense of the subject. Do you suppose

that Miss Phelps rode out with me to Goose Creek—with me alone—unless she understood that my purpose was honorable marriage? You can not surely suppose her a simpleton. What then? Shall I disappoint her reasonable calculations? Will you contribute to this result, at the manifest risk of this lady's character? By —, sir, you shall not! We shall both perish first. Rise, Paulina, my love. Mr. Ellington sees the justice and propriety of all I say."

Campbell took the lady's hand as he spoke, and looked into her eye, with that mixed smile of deviltry and affection which he had shown her in the maddest moments of their morning drive. She rose as if unconsciously—passively yielding at his will—and, in this action, she afforded to the rector an opportunity of complying with the demand which his courage did not allow him any longer to oppose. He conducted the couple into the parlor, and prepared his books. We may pass over a brief period of delay consumed in preliminaries, which greatly increased the impatience of Campbell. His madness had so much method in it, as never for a moment to allow him to lose anything that he had gained. He still continued, by words and actions, to keep up the apprehensions of the rector and the terror of the damsel. To the latter he said, while the former was making his preparations—

"It is a sublime thing to perish with one that we love! I have always thought well of French passion, from the frequency of this habit among that people. A couple, truly devoted, will say to each other—'We are happy—why should we endanger our love by exposing it to the vicissitudes of time? We might change—a terrible caprice might endanger both hearts—and familiarity produces coldness, and age neglect. Better escape this peril. Now, that love is secure, let us die together!' And they agree, and suffocate themselves with charcoal, dying together in the sweetest embrace; or, they drown together, and are taken up locked in each other's arms; or, the man shoots the woman, and taking her upon his bosom, in this attitude shoots himself! This is love—this is to be beloved!"

And, thus speaking, he kissed the pistol in his grasp, with the air of one who embraces a benefactor. Poor Paulina had not a

word to utter. When the rector prepared to officiate, Campbell still kept one of the pistols in his grasp, and, sometimes, as if unconsciously, would point it, taking aim the while, with a nice precision, at the mirror, or the pictures against the wall, or through the windows. To the ceremonial requisitions, Paulina nodded droopingly ;—an action that the rector preferred to construe into a proof of modesty rather than of fear. But the ceremony was performed ; and, flinging a purse containing ten guineas into the hands of the parson, Campbell exclaimed—

“ We have saved the horse, Paulina ; I knew we should : but it is at the peril of Stock’s life. By Jupiter, but he will swear !”

We must do our madman the justice to say that he closed the ceremony by most affectionately kissing the bride, and by wrapping her in an embrace, as fervent as was ever yet vouchsafed by a devoted lover. Then, leaving her with the rector, he sallied forth to give orders for the harnessing of his trotter to the vehicle.*

“ This is a strange proceeding, Mrs. Campbell ;” remarked the rector.

“ Very, sir,” cried the newly-wedded wife, clasping her hands with strong emotion ;—“ but what *could* I do ?”

Further explanations were, perhaps, fortunately arrested at this moment, by a clamor and a loud shouting, which-sounded from the road without. The rector moved to the entrance, followed by Paulina, and there discovered a British dragoon, riding at full speed up to the dwelling. Meanwhile, the horse was harnessed to the gig of Mad Archy, and that worthy, more magnificent than ever in his carriage, was just about ascending the steps of the piazza, when arrested by the appearance of the dragoon.

This dragoon, as the reader will readily conjecture, was the fugitive who had succeeded in making his escape from the

* It may be a proper precaution only, to assure the reader that the marriage thus described, did actually take place, under these very circumstances, and between these very parties ; the Rev. Edward Ellington officiating as above. He, himself, subsequently reported all the particulars. We may add, that long after, Mrs. Campbell admitted that she had been surprised and terrified into the act ; that she had never seriously thought of Archy Campbell for a husband.

“Quarter House,” and from the grasp of Walton’s partisans, at the moment when his companion was taken. He had been pursued, for several miles, very closely by a couple of Walton’s troopers; but, through the merits of his stout English dragoon horse, had been fortunate enough to leave them behind him. That they still pursued, he had no reason to question, and a certain urgent conviction of his danger, led him very readily to place himself entirely under the direction of Mad Archy. He had almost unconsciously followed the track of Campbell’s wheels, and now only drew his breath with ease, when he found himself in the presence of so famous a fire-eater!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOW BALFOUR SPEEDS IN HIS WOOING.

If anything moved by what he heard, the feelings of Campbell, as he listened to the narrative of the dragoon, were rather of a sort to welcome the tidings with delight, than to recoil from them with apprehension. Strife, tumult, the hazard of the die, the rare provocation to wild adventure, were things grateful to his impulsive temper. But he subjected the fugitive to close and sensible cross-examination. From him, however, he gathered little beyond the simple facts detailed at his first entrance. How he and his comrade had been surprised by a goodly host; the latter knocked down and taken, and himself pursued till within three miles of the parsonage;—this was all that he could tell. Of the captivity of Williamson he knew nothing. Campbell readily conjectured it; and, assuming this to be the object of the expedition of the partisans, he at once conceived the full danger of the captive. He was also persuaded, from what he heard, that they had disappeared from the scene of action as soon as they had secured their victim. He reasoned for their policy with reference to their necessities, and reasoned justly. A squad of fifty light-horse were not likely to linger long in a neighborhood so near to the city garrison after such an adventure. His decision was taken almost instantly.

“Paulina, my love, let us be off! We must push with all speed for the city! Not a moment to spare. Parson Ellington, a thousand thanks, for the spontaneous manner in which you have complied with my wishes!”

This was spoken with a delightful grin, that caused a deep

suffusion upon the cheek of the rector. But the disquiet which he felt did not prevent him from expostulating with the husband upon the peril of taking his wife with him upon such an adventure, threatened, as he was, with enemies upon the road.

“You will surely leave Mrs. Campbell in my protection, until——”

“Devil a bit will I! In *your* protection, forsooth! As well ask me to employ the wolf to keep my flocks. Ho! ho! reverent sir. He who has but a single diamond, and that so precious, will do well to keep it in his single bosom only. Shall I just get a wife to part with her so soon? I were as mad as my worst enemies are pleased to consider me, were I to do so ridiculous a thing; and, suffer me to say, meaning no particular personal disparagement to yourself, Mr. Ellington, that I have no such faith in your cloth, as to leave to any of the brotherhood the keeping of my ewe lamb. She goes with me. She is a soldier’s wife. We will encounter the danger together. You shall carry one of my pistols, Paulina! You shall! They are both charged with a brace of bullets! And when I say the word, look you, then shall you thrust out the weapon thus, full in the face of the assailant, and, keeping your eye open all the time, you will pull tenderly upon this little bit of curved iron, do you see, and leave the rest of the affair to me!”

Campbell suited the action to the word, while giving these instructions. The rector was too much disconcerted by his speech to expostulate any further, and the bold-hearted Paulina was as much subdued as if she had been caged for six months on bread and water.

“See to your pistols!” said Campbell to the dragoon, as he lifted the passive wife into the vehicle. “We shall have a glorious day of it, Paulina. By my soul, you *are* a heroine! There, my angel, I put one of these bull-dogs behind you. He shall give tongue at a moment’s warning. You do not fear, eh?”

“No!” was the faint response.

“I thought not!—Good-by to ye, parson! We shall pay you another visit at seed-time and harvest!—There, my lad!” throwing the servant a couple of shillings. “And now, my blood, my beauty, now that I have saved you from the rapacious

grasp of Stock, show your gratitude by showing your best heels. Phew!"—a wild whistle, followed by a flourish, smack, and sharp application of the whip, and the goodly trotter went off at a bound that soon left the parsonage out of sight behind them.

"Now am I the happiest of living men, Paulina! I have the best horse and the loveliest wife in the country! I shall mark this day with a white stone in my calendar. How that mame-luke, old Stock, will growl! By Jupiter, a treble triumph! I have not only won you, but conquered him, and saved Bucephalus! My precious! what say you; shall we make the drive to Charleston in an hour? We can do it!"

"It will kill your horse!"

"Very likely! But I feel happy enough to be killing something, and if these d—d rebels do not give us a chance at them, I shall be wolfish before we get in town. Hark you, my good fellow," to the dragoon, "how many pursued you, do you say?"

"Two, major, that I saw close after me. There were many more at the 'Quarter.'"

"How many?"

"More than fifty."

"But only two pursued you? Why the d—l didn't you show fight, when you had drawn them out of the reach of their comrades? You were well armed, had your sabre and pistols?"

"One of them I had already emptied, major."

"Well! the other was enough; the sword for one of the rebels, and the pistol for his mate. Look you, my good fellow, if you show no better spirit while with me, I'll shoot you myself; nay, my wife shall do it! Look you, Paulina, use your pistol upon this brave dragoon the moment that you see him disposed to skulk. That she may be able to do it cleverly, my good fellow, do you ride on the left; keep just five paces ahead of the chair, that you may be within easy range; and see that you keep up. I warn you that you will have to gallop like thunder if you expect to do so; but if you do not keep up the Philistines will be upon you! Phew!" and the usual whistle concluded the speech, and was followed by a smart flourish and smack of the whip.

The dragoon obeyed orders; placed himself on the left of the

vehicle, and rode under the constant terror of the lady's pistol. The speed of Campbell's trotter kept the dragoon's charger at a strain, and, as he had been compelled to tax his utmost strength and spirit in his flight from the partisans, Mad Archy was soon forced to see that if he did not relax in his requisitions, the poor beast of the dragoon would be dead-foundered and broken-winded.

"Ho! there! It's a bore to hold him; but, d—n your beast, I must not kill him, if I kill my own, and to leave you, without the protection of myself and wife, would be pretty much to kill you too. The rebels would swallow you at a mouthful. So hold up, and let the elephant creep awhile in these sandy places."

The dragoon was very well pleased to do as he was commanded. He had an affection for his charger, which, pressed much longer as he had been, would, he well knew, be very soon in a condition rendering him fit for dog's meat only. The progress of both horses subsided for a while into a walk, Campbell taking advantage of every piece of hard ground, to make up by an increased speed for lost time. In this way they reached the "Quarter House" without encountering any interruption.

They saw no enemies. It is probable that the partisans of Walton, finding the pursuit of the dragoon unavailing, and content with having driven him off sufficiently far, wheeled about and took the route back, as instructed by their superior. It is possible only that they lurked in concealment on the road-side, and forebore the attack upon a party of which one of the number was a woman. At the "Quarter House," Campbell obtained full particulars from the hostess, of the seizure of Williamson. He also discovered by whom he had been made captive. Charged with these particulars, he pushed with all speed for the city, leaving the dragoon to follow at his leisure, the road thence being considered safe from the partisans.

We pass over unnecessary details. The reader will suppose the newly-married wife, "so wildly wooed, so strangely won," to have been safely and quietly disposed of at her own habitation. Mad Archy then hurried away to Balfour's quarters, where he found the usual guard at the entrance. But Balfour

himself was absent, and our Benedick proceeded to seek him at his usual haunts. But he failed in the search at Barry's domicile in Queen street; failed equally at the house of the beautiful Harvey in Beaufain; and, after vain inquiries here and there, he at length obtained a clew which conducted him to the dwelling of Mrs. Singleton, in Church street. But, before reaching this point, he contrived, in passing, to stop at Stock's quarters; and report events, which he could scarcely hope to make so gratifying to the old major as they were to himself. He found the major engaged at his toilet for the evening. A few words sufficed to empty his budget of the matter most interesting to himself.

"Those guineas, Stock; they are now absolutely necessary to my establishment."

"What do you mean, fool?"

"Mean! That I am married, and to Paulina Phelps. The Sultana is mine, and that saves me the Sultan."

"Don't believe a word of it," said Stock.

"Very likely; but you will have to believe in fear and trembling—and pay for your slow faith in the bargain. We were hitched for life, man and wife, this very day, at the Goose Creek parsonage, Ellington, the rector, presiding, and your humble servant submitting. You will hear all soon enough. I don't want your guineas until you are satisfied; but that will be tomorrow. Meanwhile, there's news—work on hand—and a very great mischief. General Williamson has been captured by the rebels. Please prepare accordingly."

"Begone with you for a madman, as you are. The thing's impossible."

"I grant you; but nevertheless quite true."

"If it be so, by all the powers, I shall pray that Harley may make you quite indifferent to your wife and my money. I'll help him to cut your throat; by G—d, I will!"

"I think your malice may lead you to it, very nearly. But, talking of throat-cutting, reminds me that General Williamson is in danger of a short-cord, and five minutes only to say grace in it. He was captured to-day, by Colonel Walton, with a party, at the Quarter House. I am now looking for Balfour to give him the tidings."

"Well; he will be grateful for them, no doubt. Seek him at the widow Singleton's. He is there now pretty constantly. The star in the ascendant is Walton's daughter. He will be delighted to show her how many are the obligations he owes to the family."

Leaving the old major in no good humor, Campbell immediately proceeded to the designated dwelling, where he found Balfour in no pleasant humor at the interruption. But, when he heard the intelligence brought by Mad Archy, he was aghast. It took him no long time to learn all the particulars, and to anticipate all the consequences."

"Great God!" said he, "Walton will hang him!"

"Very likely," was the cool reply. . . . "When a man turns traitor to his colors, hanging forms a part of the understanding. It is the peril always incurred in such cases."

"But we must save him if we can!"

"If they mean to hang him at all, it is probably too late. Rope and tree are too convenient in our forests, to render much delay necessary."

"They may delay with the view to a formal trial. A provincial colonel will seldom venture on any such decided measure as execution without trial."

"According to all accounts, Walton is an exception to this rule. The surprise and capture show boldness enough, here, within five miles of the city; and why this audacity, unless they designed to make an example of the captive?"

"Granted; but a hurried execution will afford no such example as they require. They will aim at an ostentatious exhibition of their justice. In that is our hope. We must move promptly. Campbell, do you get your command in readiness. Go to Major Fraser, instantly, and let him call out *all* the cavalry of the garrison. To horse *all of you*, and scatter in pursuit. There is no time to be lost."

His commands were instantly obeyed; and, stripping the city of all its horse, Major Fraser led his forces that very night in pursuit of our partisans. Mad Archy was hurried away with his squadron, with a moment only allowed him for leave-taking with his wife. He bore the necessity like a philosopher of the

stoic order. Folding the lady in an embrace rather more fervent than scrupulous, he badc her be of good cheer, and show the courage proper to a soldier's wife.

"These rebels shall pay for our privations, Paula-Paulina! I almost wish that I were a Cherokee, that I might be justified in bringing you a score of scalps for your bridal trophies! But, if there be any sooty captives to be taken, you shall have spoil enough. These, my beauty! One more smack! Remember, if I perish, Stock has no claim upon my Arabian, and you *have* a claim for fifty guineas upon him. I may die in *your* debt, Paëla-Paulina, but not in his. There! another! smack!"

And with this characteristic speech and parting, mad Archy hurried from the dwelling, leaving his wife quite unprepared to determine whether his death in battle would really be an evil or a blessing. We must in charity conclude that her reflections were finally put at rest by conclusions favorable to their mutual fortune.

We must not forget what took place between Balfour and Katharine Walton, when, after the departure of Archy Campbell, he returned to the apartment where he had left her. He had been, as we may conjecture, urging indirectly a suit which her reserves had too much discouraged to suffer him to pursue a policy more frank. He had been doing the amiable, after his fashion, for a good hour before Campbell had appeared. In this aspect, his deportment had been forbearing and unobtrusive; his solicitude had been as gentle and delicate as was possible to his nature; marked, indeed, by a degree of timidity which had been steadily on the increase from the moment when his interest first began, in the lady and her fortunes. The controlling dignity of her character had sensibly coerced and checked the presumption natural to his, and he was thus, perforce, compelled to submit to an influence which he felt as a curb, from which he would have found it a real pleasure to break away, if, in doing this, he should not thereby forfeit other objects even more grateful to him than the license which he loved. On the present occasion, the tidings brought him of Williamson's capture, and of Walton's agency in that event, were suggestive to his mind of a mode of accounting with the daughter of the rebel, in such

a way, as not to compromise his own suit, yet to enable him in some degree to exercise his freedom.

“Miss Walton,” he said, with serious countenance, “my esteem for you comes greatly in conflict with my duty.”

“How so, sir?”

“You can not know how indulgently I have forborne in your case already, to the great annoyance of all the loyalists in the garrison. But I have just received intelligence which makes it almost criminal for me to regard any of your name with favor.”

“Indeed, sir?” curiously, but with a smile.

“Yes, indeed, Miss Walton. Your father—”

“Ah! sir: what of my father?” more anxiously.

“He seems resolute to deprive his friends of all power of saving him, or saving his daughter.”

A pause. He was answered only with a smile.

“You do not seem curious, Miss Walton?”

“Well, sir—since you desire it—what of my father?”

“He has done that, Miss Walton, which, in the case of any other rebel, would conduct all his connections to the provost, and work a complete forfeiture of all their possessions, and of all hope of the future favor of our sovereign. He has audaciously surprised and captured General Williamson, almost within sight of the garrison.”

“General Williamson was a traitor to his country! I see nothing in this but the act of an open enemy, and such my father has frankly avowed himself to your sovereign and his armies.”

“Very true; but General Williamson, if a traitor to the rebel cause, is true to that of his sovereign. If a hair of his head suffers at the hands of your father, I fear, Miss Walton, that his pardon will be impossible.”

“It will be time enough, Colonel Balfour, to think of his pardon, when the attitude of my father shall be that of supplication.”

The maiden answered proudly. Balfour's reply was made with a deliberate gravity which had its effect on his hearer in her own despite.

“And you may very soon behold him in that attitude, Miss

Walton; needing and entreating mercy without finding it. I have been compelled to order out my entire cavalry in pursuit. They will spare no speed—they will forego no efforts, for the recapture of General Williamson, and the destruction of the rebel squadron. Should they succeed, which is highly probable—should your father fall into their hands, I shall not be able to answer for his life. It will need all my efforts, and I shall labor in the very teeth of duty, if I strive to save him from his fate. What shall move me to these exertions—why should I so labor in his behalf? There is but one consideration, Miss Walton, but one! Your hand, your heart, your affections, in return for those which I now proffer you.”

He took her hand as he spoke these words, but she instantly withdrew it from his grasp.

“Colonel Balfour, let me entreat you to be silent on this subject, and at such a moment as the present. You describe my father to be in a situation of great danger. I am not prepared to believe in this danger. But if your report be true, it is neither a proof of your affection nor your magnanimity that I should be addressed to this effect, and at this juncture. Let me beg your forbearance. You have given me sufficient cause for sad thought; for apprehensions which forbid all consideration of the subject of which you speak.”

“But you do not forbid the subject?” he asked eagerly.

“And of what avail that I should? I have already, more than once, entreated your forbearance. If I could hope that my command would be regarded, when my entreaty is not, the word should be spoken. Is it not enough that I tell you that the subject is ungracious to me, that you only give me pain, that I can not see you in the character which you assume?”

“It is no assumption. It is felt, it is real! Miss Walton, I love you as fervently as man ever yet loved woman.”

He threw himself at her feet, and again endeavored to possess himself of her hand. She rose calmly, and with dignity.

“Colonel Balfour, this must not be! I must leave you. I can not entertain your suit. That you may be sure that I am sincere, know that my affections are wholly given to another.”

“What!” he cried, with an impatience almost amounting to

anger, which he did not endeavor to conceal; "what! is it then true? You are engaged to that rascally outlyer, Singleton?"

"Enough, Colonel Balfour; this was not necessary to satisfy me of your character, and to teach me what is due to mine. I leave you, sir. In future, I shall much prefer that we should not meet."

"You will repent this haste, Miss Walton!"

"I may suffer for it, sir!"

"By the Eternal, but you *shall* suffer for it!"

She waived her hand with dignity, bowed her head slightly, and passed into an inner apartment. The lips of Balfour were firmly set together. He watched with eyes of fiery hostility the door through which the maiden had departed; then, after the pause of a few seconds, striking his fist fiercely upon the table, he exclaimed—

"She *shall* pay for this, by all that's damnable!"

In the next moment he darted out of the dwelling, and made his way, with mixed feelings, which left him doubtful where to turn, toward the residence of *la belle Harvey*.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

WALTON'S CAMP.

THE stir and excitement in the good city of Charleston, now, had scarcely been equalled by any event occurring since its conquest by the British. The loyalists were everywhere in alarm, dreading that every moment's intelligence would bring them accounts of the summary execution of Williamson; and in his fate, they perceived lowering intimations of their own, at the hands of the patriots, should the events of war throw them into the same predicament. For the same reason, the patriots in the city were in a high state of exultation. The avenger was at work to redress their grievances, and to exact bloody atonement for the wrongs, the insults, the injuries, which they had been made to suffer. The exertions of the officers in garrison, had set the entire cavalry of the British in motion, soon after the commands of Balfour had been given; and that very night, as we have seen, Major Fraser, with an ample force, set forth in pursuit of Walton. Of course both parties were in a state of equal excitement for the result of this expedition. Fraser obtained his clews *en route*, and was soon across the Ashley. Our acquaintance, mad Archy Campbell, we may mention, conducted one of the strongest of his detachments, which were all soon dispersed in several directions, as the whole of them approached the Edisto. Leaving them to hunt out their game as they best could, let us once more join the partisans.

Walton had selected, for his temporary camp, a very pretty spot on the east bank of the Combahee. His own quarters were taken up in the dwelling-house of the plantation which his troops occupied—an airy, comfortable habitation, the proprie-

tors of which were in exile. His sentinels and videttes were so placed as to secure all the avenues to the place, and his scouts ranged freely for a considerable distance around it. With ordinary vigilance on the part of the subordinates to whom these duties were assigned, there could be no possible danger of surprise; and the commander of the party, feeling himself secure, was enabled to bestow his attention upon his several prisoners. Major Proctor was one of these prisoners, but he was held in no duress beyond that of courtesy; his word being taken that he would make no endeavor to escape, if subjected to no bonds but those of honor. Even these were to be released, now that an interval, supposed to be sufficient for safety, had been thrown between the partisans and all pursuers from the city. It was at dinner that day that Colonel Walton was pleased to say to his guest, or prisoner, that he should be free in the morning to depart.

"You will need," said he, "less than two days' easy riding to reach town, and may as well remain till to-morrow, and take an early start with the sun. I trust, Major Proctor, that you will have seen in your detention thus far nothing less than an absolute necessity, which I could not escape."

"I have nothing, Colonel Walton, of which I could possibly complain. You have treated me with great courtesy and kindness, and the release which you grant me, without any equivalent, is a debt which I shall always cheerfully acknowledge and requite."

While dinner was under discussion, a sergeant made his appearance at the door of the apartment, and summoned M'Kelvey, one of Walton's officers, away from the company. He returned a moment after with the tidings that one of the prisoners had somehow succeeded in making his escape.

"It appears, by the way, Major Proctor," said M'Kelvey, "that the fellow was a servant of yours. This I have just ascertained. He was taken about the same time with yourself, while returning from Dorchester."

"Ha!" exclaimed Proctor, with surprise. "Is it possible? *He* taken?"

"Had you mentioned him, major," said Walton, "I should have placed him in your hands."

"It is, perhaps, better that you did not. Had you done so, I had most probably shot him. He is a scoundrel. If taken following me from Dorchester, he was a spy upon my actions, commissioned by my enemies. And he has escaped?"

"Within an hour," replied M'Kelvey.

"You will do well to pursue him," said Proctor. "He is a consummate scoundrel, and will bring your enemies upon you."

"Scarcely, for we shall be away by sunset, leaving you in possession of the mansion. We can spare no time, now, for pursuit, and the fellow is not worth the trouble. Had we known his relations to you before, we might have prevented this; but—fill, Major Proctor; do not let it annoy you. This is choice old Madeira, such as seldom honors our camp."

Proctor filled the glass mechanically; his brow contracted with thought, and his imagination readily suggesting to him that circumstances had, strangely enough, woven around him a web of increasing meshes, rendering his case more than ever complicated. With an effort, he shook off this mood, and abruptly addressed Colonel Walton in reference to his more distinguished captive.

"Pardon me, Colonel Walton, but you have another prisoner. Pray tell me what is your design with regard to General Williamson?"

"He is a traitor, Major Proctor, to our cause!" was the stern reply.

"Yes, but——"

"There is but one fate for such."

"But *you*—*you* will not be the voluntary instrument of punishment?"

"I would not if I could escape it. If it were possible to convey him to the hands of Marion or Greene, I would gladly do so, but——"

"There is no need of this, Col. Walton," said M'Kelvey impatiently; "I know not any right that we have to shuffle off an unpleasant duty upon others. It is our duty to try this traitor, or it is not. He deserves punishment, or he does not. He is in our hands, and the blood of our fathers, hung at Camden and

other places, by Cornwallis and his tory allies, demand that he shall not be suffered to escape without his deserts. I am for doing *my* duty. If we delay, we may lose him. We ought not to risk the chances of securing justice, by any wild attempt to convey such a prisoner quite across the country, from the extreme south to extreme north, from Combahee to Lynch's Creek, only that he may be tried and punished for an offence of which he is notoriously guilty, and upon which we have the right to sit in judgment and to execute. Had you suffered me, he should have been swinging to the highest tree on the high road to Charleston, in twenty minutes after he was taken."

"I am glad you did not consent to so summary a procedure," said Proctor to Walton.

The latter said gravely, answering M'Kelvey:—

"Do not reproach me, Captain M'Kelvey. I have no desire to escape my duties when I clearly recognise them to be such. As for this man, Williamson, we have ordered him for examination this afternoon, and my decision will depend upon what shall be then educed in evidence. I hope to prove myself neither blood-thirsty nor weak. If his death can be shown as likely to promote our cause, he shall die, though I myself become the executioner. If this can not be shown, then shall he live, though I myself perish in defending him. In this reply, Major Proctor, you too are answered. As you remain here this afternoon, you will please be present at his trial. I prefer that you should be able, as an impartial witness, to report truly what we do."

"This privilege, Colonel Walton, determines me to remain. But for this, I should have entreated your permission to depart for the city instantly. It is, indeed, quite important to my own interests that I should be there. You are, perhaps, not aware that I too labor under suspicions which seriously threaten my safety; and that I momentarily expect to be brought to trial for something like treason to my sovereign. It is but natural, therefore, that I should sympathize with another in a like danger, though, perhaps, under circumstances exceedingly unlike."

"Yes, indeed: there can be no comparison in the facts of

your case and those in the case of Williamson. But what are your offences?"

"A supposed participation in your escape at Dorchester—"

"Good Heavens! Is it possible?"

"And other treasonable conduct evinced during my command of that post, particularly in my visits and supposed intimacy with yourself and family."

"But my testimony would acquit you of all these absurd charges!"

"Yes, perhaps; if your testimony would be received. But you forget the position which you yourself occupy in the eye of the British authorities."

"True! true! But can I do nothing for you?"

"Nothing that I can see. Yes, perhaps! Be merciful to this unfortunate man in your custody."

Walton grasped the hand of Proctor, as the parties rose from the table. He made no other reply. M'Kelvey was not thus silent.

"Mercy to ourselves and to our people, deny that so great a traitor should have mercy!"

This was said aloud, and, as he left the room, he muttered audibly: "Would that I had run him up to the first oak before we left the Ashley."

"He is not the proper person to sit on this trial, Colonel Walton," said Proctor, referring to the last speaker.

"At all events, Major Proctor, I shall exercise the discretion of a supreme judge in this case. I do not say that we may not find it imperative to condemn this man to instant execution; but I can assure you, that I shall feel a real satisfaction in escaping from such conviction."

Nothing more was said upon the subject. Proctor was left for awhile to himself, and employed his solitude in becoming meditations of his own future and affairs. He had enough to make him gloomy and apprehensive. The intelligence of the espionage of his man John—for such it evidently was—of his capture and escape, showed him the probability of new and unexpected involvements, making his case more suspicious in character and more difficult of defence. It was only with a desper-

ate effort, finding his head to ache under the embarrassments of his thought, that he succeeded in giving a new direction to his meditations.

Meanwhile, Walton had ascertained the particulars of the escape made by Proctor's servant. The fellow had been gone fully three hours when his absence was first discovered. A woman, bringing in fruits and vegetables to the camp, had met him several miles on the road below, and described his person exactly. By what means he had escaped the vigilance of the sentinels could not be ascertained; but that he had thus succeeded, counselled Walton to a strengthening of his guards, which accordingly took place. Having given orders to his officers to have their men in readiness for moving across the Combahee by sundown, Walton prepared for the examination of Williamson. The great hall of the mansion was assigned for this purpose, and the unfortunate prisoner, conscious equally of his degradation and danger, in the eyes, and at the hands, of his old associates, was brought manacled into the centre of a group, in whose stern faces he read no sympathy, and from whose harsh judgments he could possibly entertain no hope. At the very moment that he was thus brought up for trial, with a penalty the most fearful in his eyes, the runagate servant of Proctor was encountered by the British detachment under the command of Mad Archy Campbell. He was brought before that dashing officer, and his examination may well precede that of Williamson.

"What! John, is that you? Where the devil have you been? Where's your master?"

"Ah, sir; your honor, I've been in bad hands; I've been a prisoner to the enemy. They're only seven miles, here away, a matter of fifty horse or so, under the command of Colonel Walton."

"Beelzebub! Do you say? Walton; and but fifty men; and I have sixty! Push forward with the advance, Captain Auld; but seven miles! We must have a grand supper on steel to-night!"

"If you'll move cautious, major, you'll surprise 'em. They don't look for you or any of our people. They're very loose

about the sentinels ; that's how I came to get away. Most of their parties are busy looking for fruit about the farms, the regular grub being pretty scarce in those quarters."

"A good notion! Better to surprise than be surprised, and an ambuscade is an inconvenient thing. Hold up your men, captain, while we discuss this matter. I say, John, you are quite sure of what you say?"

"Oh! yes, sir, it's as true as the Book."

"It is Walton's party, and he has but fifty men, and his sentries are careless."

"All true, sir."

"Has Colonel Walton any prisoners—your master?"

"Why, major, my master's *with* Colonel Walton's party; but whether he's a prisoner or not, it's not for me to say."

"Why, you d——d Trojan, what do you insinuate?"

"Well, major, I don't insinuate nothing, only I can't help seeing for myself. I followed my master from Dorchester, and they put me in ropes, and let him go free."

"Why, you booby, did you think that they would tie up a gentleman like a blackguard! They could rely on your master's word of honor, fool; but who could rely on yours?"

"Yes, sir, I know that, but——"

"But what?"

"I don't think that Major Proctor's been a prisoner at all. I've a notion that when he went into Colonel Walton's camp, he know'd pretty much where he was going. He's been free ever since. I never heard that they watched him at all; and, indeed, the people told me that he had gone over to the rebel cause."

"Silence, you d——d heathen! That a fellow should suspect his own master! Where do you expect to go when you die, Philistine? Say no more of your master! But tell me if General Williamson is still a prisoner with Colonel Walton."

"Fast, sir, and they do say that they mean to hang him. There was something said this very morning of a jury to be set upon him."

"It is not too late! We must push forward quickly, but cautiously, Captain Auld. This fellow will be your guide. Take

him to the front, and follow his information ; but, if he shows any trifling, cut him down as you would a cabbage. Do you hear that, John ? do you understand it ? Very well ; I see you do ; and you know that there's no jest in it ! Now, go forward, lead us faithfully, and, if we succeed in surprising the rebels, you shall have five guineas. If you fail us ; if you show treachery, or even lie in this business, you are only so much dog's meat to the sabre."

"Thank your honor," said John, lifting his hat, and referring wholly to the five guineas. "If they ain't moved from the camp, you'll be sure to catch 'em in it."

"Reasonable logic ; away !" cried Mad Archy, and the party disappeared from sight under the guidance of the fugitive.

He led them unerringly. Unhappily for our friends, his report of the remissness of Walton's sentries was much too true. Newly-raised militia-men, not yet subdued by training, and far from systematic in their military habits, they were quite too prone to assume their position to be secure, without making it certainly so. Without dreaming of any movement from the garison, they did not anticipate one. Pinched by hunger, or lured by the love of fruit, the sentinels had wandered off, in most cases, from the posts assigned them, and were busied in deserted orchards, thrashing the peach-trees for their late and unripe harvest.

While thus occupied, the British troopers stole within the line of sentries. One incident will serve to illustrate the fate of these unfortunate wretches, in their miserable neglect of duty. On the edge of an old orchard, which was bounded by an open tract of pine forest, a young woman was seated upon a fallen tree, peeling peaches, and chipping them up into small pieces, evidently meant for a pot which stood near her, in which a few quarts of water was simmering above a slow fire. At the side of the woman, lay a man upon the ground, his head leaning upon the log. He was sleeping. He was garbed in the usual costume of the rangers, with a light-blue hunting shirt fringed with cotton, and with falling cape similarly ornamented. At the end of the fallen tree, leaned against some of the upright branches, was the rifle which he carried. With the exception of a *couteau de chasse*, stuck in his belt, he wore no other weap-

on His coonskin cap had fallen from his head while he slept, and now lay on the other side of the log.

On a sudden, the young woman raised her head and seemed to listen. She resumed her occupation after a moment's pause, as if satisfied; but again, after another brief interval, she put on the attitude of a listener, and at length, with some anxiety in her manner, she laid her hand on the arm of the sleeping man.

"Joel, Joel," she cried, "wake up: I hear horses from below."

"Eh! ah!" sighed the sleeper—slowly comprehending her—and opening his eyes vacantly.

"I hear horses from below, Joel."

"Ah! some of our scouts I 'spose."

"It sounds like a troop, Joel; better get up."

"Oh! Sall, it's only jist that you wants to be talking to me; that's it."

"No! I declare! Don't you hear them, Joel?"

"Why, yes I do; but it's only a few of the scouts got together, and a riding into the camp."

"There's a great many on 'em, I reckon by the sound."

"So there is," cried the fellow, rising slowly to his feet, and looking curiously about him.

Beginning to perceive something unusual in the approach of such a body of horse as he now distinctly heard, the sense of vigilance was not sufficiently habitual to move him to an instant decision for his own safety, or the performance of his duties. Had he then seized his rifle, prepared to discharge it as soon as thoroughly certified of an enemy, and dashed for the thickets a moment after, he would have saved himself, and advised the camp of the approach of danger. But he stood gazing at the wood from which the sounds continued to approach, his rifle still leaning among the branches twenty feet from him and more.

On a sudden, he was brought to the fullest conviction of his folly and his danger, as a group of three British horsemen dashed out of the wood, within less than fifty yards distant. Their scarlet uniforms at once opened his eyes to his true situation. To bound forward to the place where stood his rifle, was the first

instinct, but it lay between him and the approaching enemy. He hesitated. Sally cried to him, catching his arm as she did so, and pushing him toward the thicket—

“Run, Joel. Take the bushes—that’s your only chance.”

But the manly instinct, tardy as it was, interposed to prevent his adoption of this now judicious advice. He flung her off, and rushed for the rifle. But his haste, and the fact that, while seeking it with his hand, his eye was kept upon the enemy, caused a momentary embarrassment, some of the dead branches of the tree catching the lock of the weapon. When, at length, he drew it out, one of the three horsemen was upon him, and within a few paces only. The whole proceeding had occupied but a few seconds. The rifleman, in a moment, perceived that, to prepare his weapon, turn upon his assailant, take aim and fire, would be impossible where he then stood. His object was to secure a little space which would give him momentary safety. To leap the massive shaft of the tree, and throw its branches between himself and the horseman, was the obvious plan for safety; and he attempted it; but too late. Even as he leaped, the sabre of Mad Archy—for he was the foremost enemy—made a swift bright circle in the air, and, striking with horizontal edge, smote sheer, slicing off completely the coronal region of the unfortunate man. He fell across the tree, prone, without a struggle.

“Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown!” cried the reckless trooper in a quotation from Shakspeare, shouted rather than spoken. He added, making the sentence significant—“Yours, my good fellow, has no such impediment to sleep hereafter.”

The horrors of the scene seemed only to enliven the mood of the desperate soldier. His eye glared with that rapture of the strife, which made the Hun so terrible in battle, and which forms the vital passion of the Berserker of the northern nations. Mad Archy Campbell belonged to this order of wild and terrible spirits. His sword was still uplifted, when the young woman rushed toward the body of her late companion, her arms extended, her face wild as that of a maniac.

“Out of the way, woman!” he cried aloud as he beheld her movement, and sought to draw his steed aside from her path,

‘Out of the way, I say! A woman is never in more danger than when she would run over a horseman.’

She did not heed him at all; but, tottering forward, fell down by the side of the murdered man. Clapping spurs to his horse, Campbell went over her at a bound, clearing, and without touching, the unhappy creature. For a moment the fierce horseman thought it possible that his wild blow had cut asunder some dear and very precious, though very humble human affection; but unhappily such performances lay within the province assigned him, and he had still other and like duties to perform. He looked not even back upon the mixed group, the living and the dead; but, joined by others of his squad, bearing swords already dripping like his own, he hurried forward to the surprise of the rebel camp.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

LIFE OR DEATH.

WE have seen Walton and his officers assembled for the trial, or examination, of the prisoner, Williamson. Major Proctor was present at the proceedings, a curious and somewhat excited spectator. Walton presided, grave, stern, commanding, and resolute to do his duty, and that only. Williamson looked weary, but his carriage was not undignified. He noticed the presence of Proctor with looks which seemed to betray dissatisfaction. Knowing, as we do, his secret, the presence of the British officer was necessarily a restraint upon him. How could he declare, in his hearing, that he was actually playing the part in the British garrison, as an emissary of Marion and Green? Yet, to establish this fact, to the satisfaction of his present judge, was the only hope left to him of safety.

Every form common to such trials was rigidly adhered to. The officers of the court were sworn. The prisoner was duly arraigned. The charges and specifications were then stated by a judge advocate, by whom a list of witnesses was submitted, upon whose testimony he relied to establish the truth of the charges made. Upon these charges he dilated in a speech, which reviewed the whole career of Williamson, from the first period of his public life, when he did good service to the state against the Indians, passing to that when he strove honorably in the cause of the patriots; and showing, in contrast with these honorable histories, his supposed unhappy falling off from sworn faith and country. To all this matter the arraigned person was permitted to reply.

Williamson was not an orator, not a speaker at all, not even

a tolerably-educated man. He was absolutely illiterate; but by no means wanting in intelligence. He had mother-wit and shrewdness in considerable share; was sensible and thoughtful; had lived too long by his own efforts, and among intelligent and accomplished men, not to have acquired a considerable degree of readiness, and, indeed, a certain share of grace. He rose to reply to the charges made against him, and which, we need not say, were proved by several credible witnesses. He reviewed the history which had been just given of his career. He did not complain of any injustice, until the period was reached which described him as deserting from the cause of his country, and taking sides with her enemies. To this point he answered in some such language as the following:—

“This alleged desertion from the cause of my country consists in my having taken a British protection, even as you, sir, have taken a British protection——”

This was addressed to Colonel Walton. His brow was warmly flushed, as he replied—

“When I took a British protection, sir, I was under *duress*, a prisoner, in fact, and in a situation well known to the country; and the protection which I took, under protest all the while, was urged upon me by my friends as absolutely unavoidable in my situation, and absolutely necessary to the safety of my family no less than my own. But *I* am not under trial, sir:—when it becomes necessary for me to answer to my country, I trust that I shall not find it difficult to meet all the charges made against me.”

“Pardon me, sir,” replied Williamson, modestly. “In referring to the protection taken by yourself, I meant only to indicate the true character of that compromise which the necessities of the time forced so many of us to make. Until Buford’s defeat, I appeal to all the world to say, if I did not honorably and truly maintain my allegiance to the revolutionary party. But in the defeat of Buford went down all organized opposition in the state. It was supposed, on all hands, that the contest was at an end, so far as South Carolina and Georgia were concerned. The regular troops of both were defeated and mostly in captivity. In the fall of Charleston, five thousand of our disposable

troops were taken from the field. The defeat of Buford disposed, in like manner, of all our Virginia allies. The continental army was a skeleton, and continental money had ceased to be a tender. Without means, or men, or money, I called my officers together. My command of rangers was almost the only one in the state which had not been dispersed; and, after deliberate consultation, it was agreed that the contest was hopeless. I declared my determination to abide by their decision, and the result of our deliberations was that we should abandon the field and disperse."

"But not surrender to the enemy"—said the judge advocate—"not join his forces, not give him aid and comfort."

"I did neither," was the somewhat hesitating reply of Williamson.

"It is unfortunate for you," said the advocate, "that your correspondence with Richard Pearis, Robert Fletchall, and others, is on record, and in our hands."

"All these letters can be explained, and shown as innocent. Besides, when they were written, I can show that I too was under *duress*."

"Yes: but it was of your own seeking. You had voluntarily thrown yourself into the city of Charleston."

"What was to be done? Of all the acknowledged leaders of the state, not one was to be found. Some were in captivity; others had fled. General Moultrie was a prisoner-of-war; so was General Gadsden, it was not known what had become of Colonel Marion; and General Sumter and Governor Rutledge had both fled the state."

"Fled only to North Carolina, and thither only to find recruits in order to renew the struggle," answered the judge advocate.

"I grant, sir," continued Williamson, "that I might have done the same: I confess my regret that I did not. I now see, by what Marion and Sumter have done, what might have been done by many others; but I must plead ignorance of our resources, or my own resources; and not wilfulness or a treacherous purpose, when, forbearing to follow the example, which as yet had not been shown, I yielded up a seemingly hopeless

struggle. I followed, indeed, a very frequent example, in taking British protection, as entirely hopeless of any other."

"The charge is not simply that you disbanded your command, and submitted to the enemy; it is that you joined them, and took sides against your friends. I herewith submit to the court your intercepted letters to certain notorious royalists of the back country, and your letters to certain patriots of the same region, urging upon them the necessity of going over to the British cause. If you deny your agency in these letters, we are prepared to prove your signature."

"I am very far from denying these letters. I freely confess them; but look at the dates when they were written, and you will discover that they were written at the moment when I myself took the protection of the British, and embodied simply the arguments by which I was influenced; showing, indeed, the exigency which, as I supposed, prevailed throughout the state. Nobody then believed, or appeared to believe, that we had anything to hope for. Congress, it was understood, scarcely able to maintain its ground in the north, was prepared to abandon the extreme south to its fate. That Marion, Sumter, and others, should subsequently take the field, and with so much success, was nowhere anticipated; and that they have done so, affords me a satisfaction quite as great as that which any of you feel."

A smile of derision lightened up the faces of several members of the court at this assertion. Walton regarded the speaker with a grave sorrow of countenance. The judge advocate indulged in a bitter sarcasm; and Captain M'Kelvey, striking impatiently upon the table, exclaimed—

"Upon my soul we have too much talking by half. What need of it? The prisoner confesses the charges against him. He admits the letters, and they prove everything. That he should try to explain them away is absurd. His crime is acknowledged. I don't see why we should not proceed to judgment. I say, for one, that he is a proven traitor, and deserves the death of one; and I move you, Mr. President, that we take the vote on the question."

"Ay, ay! the vote: guilty or not guilty?" was the echo from several other voices. Williamson became fearfully agitated.

"Is this a trial, Mr. President?"

"Be patient, sir," answered Walton.

"It is a more formal and regular trial, by far, than Rawdon and Balfour accord to the whigs, our brethren," was the angry reply of the judge advocate.

"Ay, indeed, 'Rawdon's mercy,' and 'Tarleton's Quarters, are rare sorts of trials!" cried M'Kelvey.

The feeling was rising. The court was becoming momentarily more and more irritable and boisterous. "Death to the traitor!" was audibly announced.

"Mr. President," said Williamson, "it is surely clear to you that I can not have justice at this board, with such a temper prevailing among its members."

"Silence the traitor!" muttered several voices; "we have heard quite enough!"

"The vote, Mr. President," cried M'Kelvey.

"I do not see why the question should not be taken, Mr. President," pursued the judge advocate. "Every substantial fact is admitted by the defendant. He is guilty, by his own confession, of going over to the enemy—of corresponding with the blood-thirsty tories who have been rioting in the spoils of our people upon the borders;—he admits that he has written these letters to our friends, seeking to seduce them from their allegiance; asserting the inevitable ascendancy and success of the British. He lives within a British garrison, and is, as we can also show, the trusted counsellor of Balfour and Rawdon. Is anything more necessary for his conviction?"

The excitement increased with this speech. Williamson eagerly and urgently entreated to be heard; renewed his arguments and explanations; and was with difficulty secured a hearing. It was evident that a vote taken in regard to his guilt, and decreeing summary and extreme punishment, would be almost, if not quite, unanimous; and the defence of the prisoner, as made by himself, was now of a sort rather to provoke than conciliate hostility. His agitation, and the exhibition of some temper, were at variance with all prudence and good policy. Proctor could no longer restrain himself. He rose from his seat,

passed to that of the president, and placed before him a paper on which he had pencilled these words—

“For God’s sake, for your own sake, Colonel Walton, do not suffer these men to decide this case! They are resolute to have this man’s blood, and the circumstances of the case, and the condition of the country, neither call for, nor will sanction its shedding. Let me entreat you, as a man of honor and a Christian, to interpose!”

Walton wrote at the bottom of the paper—

“At the right moment, I will. Fear nothing. I will adjourn the court and refer the case to General Greene, and a board of superior officers.”

This episode had not taken place without causing a new emotion in the assembly. There were audible murmurs about the court in regard to the impertinence of one prisoner taking part for another. These murmurs were silenced by the judge advocate, who, in a whisper to the most turbulent said—

“All’s right; Proctor’s come over to us. He has no more love for the traitor than we. Be still!”

Whether he expressed his own conjecture, or repeated only what he had heard, can not be said; but Williamson appeared to regard the interposition of Proctor with a mind suspicious that it augured him no good. With a somewhat violent manner, he exclaimed—

“This is unwarrantable, Mr. President. I protest against any interference, in this case, on the part of a British officer and an enemy. This court is not in the temper for the just trial of my case. It is full of my enemies.”

“Does General Williamson appeal from this court? His appeal will lie to General Marion, or to General Greene?”

The suggestion was eagerly seized by the accused.

“I do appeal,” he cried; “but in the meantime, I have that to say to the president, if allowed to speak with him in private, which, I think, will satisfy him of my innocence, and, that I ought to go free from trial altogether.”

“Ha! ha! ha! Very good!” was the response of M’Kelvey. Walton gravely spoke:—

“Gentlemen, with your permission, I will accord to General

Williamson the private interview he seeks. This can do no harm; particularly, since his appeal will render delay inevitable."

"If allowed," cried the judge advocate; "but I see not why it should be allowed."

"It must be, if urged," answered Walton; "our jurisdiction is not final."

"It ought to be," muttered the judge advocate; and audible murmurs around the board showed how intractable were the wild spirits whom the president was required to control. Walton did not seem to heed these murmurs, but, rising from his seat, said to Williamson—

"Now, sir, if you have anything to communicate, we will retire to the adjoining chamber. I would not do you injustice, General Williamson; nay, would save your life if this be possible."

"I will show you good reason why you should," answered Williamson, eagerly, as the two left the room together. A noisy discussion among the heated bloods of the court, followed the departure of the president and the prisoner. It was now very evident, to Proctor, that, but for Walton, Williamson would, long ere this, have expiated his offences, real or supposed, on the nearest tree. His reflections assured him that, according to the mode of judgment in these times, such a summary execution would have been perfectly justified by the circumstances, assuming them to be true. Of course, he knew nothing of the secret relations between Williamson and Colonel Singleton.

While the officers around him continued in noisy discussion of the matter, our Englishman rose and went to the window. He gazed out upon a once lovely lawn, now in ruins. The shade trees, in front of the house, had shed numerous branches, which were unremoved, and the undergrowth was gross and matted; all was significant of the wild and vexed condition under which the land was groaning. Broken and decaying fences, right and left, and the slender skeleton stalks of the cornfields of previous years, looked equally mournful; while the silence, that spread everywhere without, was singularly expressive of the real desolation of the country.

While Proctor gazed and mused, the silence was suddenly

broken by the sound of pistol-shots. These seemed to command no attention among the assembly within. Proctor thought the event worthy of remark, as it would have been in any well-ordered encampment; but he reflected upon the loose habits, and frequent disorder among the militia, and he concluded this to be nothing more than one of their ordinary violations of discipline.

But, even as he looked out, he caught a glimpse, at a distance, beyond the open cornfield, of three of the rangers, running confusedly from one side of the field, as if seeking a cover in the woods beyond. A few moments after, he descried the flashing of scarlet uniforms among the trees in the opposite woods. This unfolded to him the true history. He, at once, felt for the officers around him, and for Walton; all of them wholly unconscious of the apparent danger. With a generous impulse, he turned to the company, still eagerly clamorous in respect to Williamson.

“Gentlemen, if I mistake not, your camp is in danger of surprise, if not actually surprised. I have heard pistol-shots, and have just now caught glimpses of the British uniform among the pines in that wood upon the southeast.”

The whole party rushed to the window. By this time, other pistol-shots were heard. Soon, others of the riflemen, scattered, and in evident flight, were seen to hurry for the woods along the edge of the cornfield, and, at length, a group of dragoons, in the rich uniform of the British army, suddenly appearing, left the event no longer doubtful.

“Great God! we are surprised! They will be soon upon us!” cried more than one of the officers.

“These d——d videttes and sentries!” cried M’Kelvey; “that the lives of brave men should rest upon such rascals! To horse, men, and let us see what can be done.”

“Nothing remains to be done now,” remarked Proctor, quietly. “but to fly! Your people are evidently dispersed.”

M’Kelvey gave him a fierce look, and glanced upon him with angry eyes; but, without a word, darted to the chamber where Walton and Williamson were in conference. He knocked with the hilt of his sword upon the door, which he vainly attempted to open, crying out the while—

‘The enemy are upon us, colonel; you have not a moment to lose.’

The door was instantly thrown open, and Walton came forth eagerly, followed by Williamson.

“The enemy! where? And no alarm?”

“None! The sentries have been asleep, d——n ’em, and our men are probably all dispersed.”

“We must see to that,” cried Walton, preparing to go forth.

“It is too late, Colonel Walton, to look after your men,” said Proctor, approaching. “Fly, while time is allowed you. The dragoons are, even now, speeding across the cornfield, directly for the house.”

“Too true!” cried M’Kelvey, who had been looking; “we must take the back track, colonel, for the swamp. Fortunately, our horses are just behind the house.”

Walton looked out, and saw a squad of Campbell’s dragoons, headed by that impetuous captain, in full speed for the dwelling, and scarcely three hundred yards distant. “*Sauve qui peut!*” was the counsel of every instinct. The back door of the house was already open, and the party rapidly descended from the piazza to the horses. Looking back, just as he was mounting, M’Kelvey saw Williamson at the entrance, watching every movement with great appearance of anxiety.

“Shall the d——d traitor escape after all?” he cried, fiercely. “Not, by Heavens, while I have a bullet!”

He drew a pistol from his holster at the word, but Walton caught his arm.

“Stay!” said he; “you know not what you do! Let the man alone. He better serves us in the British garrison than he did when he was ours. Spurs, gentlemen, and scatter for the swamp!”

Walton saw his officers off at different points, making for the ricefields beyond which lay the thickets, which, once reached, would afford the most ample refuge. With a courteous wave of the hand to the balcony, where Proctor and Williamson stood, he gave spurs to his own splendid charger, a black, which had never before failed him. M’Kelvey kept beside him, a fierce but devoted follower; and they were rapidly approaching

the rear fence which separated the house enclosure from the abandoned ricefields, when the British dragoons, Campbell at their head, burst into the yard. They never noticed Proctor or Williamson; but, with the fugitives full in view, dashed pell-mell upon their tracks. Meanwhile, Walton, as M'Kelvey and himself approached the fence, gave way to the latter, crying—

“Go ahead, captain, and take the leap; the causeway will suffer but one horseman at a time.”

This was a generous suggestion, for the horse of Walton was in the lead. It was an unwise decision made at that moment, since, to enable M'Kelvey to go ahead, it was necessary that Walton should curb the impulse already given to his horse. M'Kelvey, to do him justice, growled audibly at the idle courtesy, but felt that it was not a moment to dispute the privilege. He drove the rowel into his lighter-made steed, and the animal went clear. Walton was less fortunate. The track grew slippery as he descended the bank. He felt the beast falter slightly, and, in fact, trip, just before the fence was reached. But, giving him spur and rein at the right moment, he, too, went over, but fell prone to the earth, as leaping beyond the horse of M'Kelvey, he stumbled upon a break in the rice-dam. Walton was thrown completely over his head, and lay stunned for a moment.

In that moment the British troopers passed. M'Kelvey, beholding the danger of his superior, wheeled about, and dashed back, sabre uplifted; and, with all the recklessness of a knight errant, rushed headlong to meet the enemy. He was cut down in the conflict with two of the dragoons, and, when Walton's eyes opened upon the scene, the last struggles of his brave lieutenant were at an end.

He opened his eyes only to find himself a prisoner. Mad Archy, with a score of dragoons, stood over him, effectually precluding every thought of conflict. Stunned and bruised, and scarcely conscious of his situation, he was taken by his captors back to the dwelling, where mad Archy was enabled to realize the full extent of his successes. There he found both Williamson and Proctor. The former, though by no means a favorite with Campbell, he congratulated upon his escape—having been already taught how imminent had been his danger. Williamson

very properly omitted all reference to the interview which he had had with Walton, in which, by the way, he had shown to the latter what all-sufficient reasons there were, why, if to be hung by anybody, he should suffer that fate by the hands rather of the British than the American.

To Proctor, the manner of Archy Campbell was marked by great gravity and coldness.

"Your servant is here, Major Proctor. To him we are indebted for guidance to the rebel camp. Perhaps you will do well to set him right as to the true circumstances in which he left you here. I have only to say to you, that his report shows him to entertain very equivocal notions of your present relations with the enemy."

"My servant is a scoundrel, Major Campbell," was the stern response of Proctor.

"I think it very likely," was the indifferent answer; "and shall beg you to take charge yourself of his correction and reform. I have but to pay him five guineas, and we are quits."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

WIDOWS THE BEST MATERIAL FOR WIVES.

It was noon of the day which has thus been distinguished by the rescue of Williamson and the capture of Colonel Walton, when two horsemen might have been seen slowly riding in a southerly direction, on the route between the Edisto and the Combahee rivers. They were both well mounted and armed; the one who seemed the leader carrying sword by side, and pistols in his holsters; the other, in addition to pistols, having a neat, well-polished, and short rifle, lying across the pommel of his saddle. In the portly person and fresh, florid features of the former, we recognise Lieutenant Porgy, of Singleton's command: in the latter the young ensign, Lance Frampton.

If the reader has not forgotten some former passages in this true history, he will find it easy to account for the presence of these two personages in this neighborhood, at the present juncture. It has probably not been forgotten, that, soon after the defeat which Singleton had given to Lieutenant Meadows, and the capture of that officer and of his convoy, the former commissioned these two officers, Porgy and Frampton, to convey a baggage-wagon, with supplies, to the camp of Colonel Walton. As this camp was known to be erratic—as was usually the case among the partisans of any experience—the duty thus assigned them implied delay, difficulty, a tedious search, and the exercise of a constant caution. Lieutenant Porgy was instructed to take his wagon with as much despatch as was consistent with secrecy, to the cover of the swamps of the Edisto, on the west side of that river; to leave it there in concealment, with a portion of his detachment, and then, himself, with Frampton, to

proceed in search of the squadron of Walton. There was yet another duty, if we recollect, which was assigned, at the same time, to this officer and his young companion. This was to seek out the widow of Walter Griffin, one of the soldiers of Singleton, who had fallen in the engagement with the troop of Meadows, and to convey to her and her daughter the tidings of his death and burial, together with his effects, and a certain amount in English guineas, which Singleton was fortunate enough to gather from the treasure-chest of Meadows, and which he promptly shared among his followers.

This latter duty was properly confided in part to Frampton. He might now be considered almost a member of Griffin's family; the tender interest which he felt in Ellen, the fair daughter of the latter, having received from Griffin, while he lived, every sanction, and being generally supposed equally agreeable to the young damsel herself. The melancholy part of his task, therefore, was not without its compensative considerations, and no one could better express the language of sympathy and regret than one who was thus necessarily a sharer in the misfortune. Nor, according to his own notions, was Lieutenant Porgy himself improperly assigned a portion of this duty. This excellent epicure had his own secret. He had a selfish reason for his readiness to undertake a search like the present, which, but for this reason, would have brought him annoyance only. But we must leave it to himself and the sagacity of the reader to unfold this secret motive as we proceed.

We need not very closely follow the footsteps of Porgy and his party, from the moment when they left Ravenel's plantation on the Santee, and proceeded to the Edisto. Porgy was a man nearly as full of prudence as plethora. He was luxurious, but he was vigilant; fond of good things, but neglectful of no duty in seeking them. He succeeded in conveying his baggage-wagon in safety to the spot destined for its hiding-place, in the swamp-thickets of the Edisto. Here he left it in charge of Lieutenant Davis, a shrewd and practised ranger. This done, he set out, as we have seen, with Ensign Frampton, with the twofold object of finding Colonel Walton and the widow Griffin.

Of the former, the party had been able to hear nothing by

which to guide their progress. He was supposed to be ranging somewhere between the Salkehatchie and the Savannah. In the route now pursued, they had the widow Griffin in view, rather than the partisan. Frampton knew where she dwelt, and it was hoped that, on reaching her abode, some intelligence might be obtained from her of Walton. The two had accordingly taken a bee line from the swamps of Edisto for the humble farmstead of the widow, and at noon of the day in question might probably be some ten miles from it. But they had ridden fast and far that morning, and when, after crossing a brooklet, or *branch*, which gushed, bright and limpid, across the high road, Frampton exclaimed—"It's only nine miles and a skip; we could make it easy in two hours, lieutenant;"—the other answered with a growl that singularly resembled an imprecation. "Only nine miles!" repeated Frampton, urgently.

"And if it were only three, master Lance, I would not budge a rod farther until I had seen our wallet emptied. No, no! young master, you must learn a better lesson. Never do you hurry, even if it be on the road to happiness. No man enjoys life who gallops through it. Take it slowly; stop frequently by the way, and look about you. He who goes ahead ever, passes a treasure on both sides which he never finds coming back. By pausing, resting, looking about you, and meditating, you secure the ground you have gained, and acquire strength to-conquer more. Many a man, through sheer impatience, has swam for the shore, and sunk just when it rose in sight. Had the fool turned on his back and floated for an hour, the whole journey would have been safe and easy. If you please, master Lance, we'll turn upon our backs for an hour. I have an appetite just now. If I fail to satisfy it, I lose it till to-morrow, and the loss is irretrievable. There is some jerked beef in your wallet, I think, and a few biscuit. We will turn up this branch, the water of which is cool and clear, put ourselves in a close, quiet place in the woods, and pacify the domestic tiger."

The young ensign, eager, impatient, and not hungry, was compelled to subdue his desire to hurry forward. He knew that argument, at this hour, and under these circumstances, with

his superior, was vain. He submitted accordingly without further expostulation, and with a proper grace; and, riding ahead, ascended a little elevation, which led him, still following the winding of the creek, to a cool, shady, and retired spot some two hundred yards from the roadside. He was closely followed by his more bulky companion; and, dismounting, stripping their horses, and suffering them to graze, they prepared to enjoy the frugal provision which was afforded by the leathern wallet which the young man carried. This was soon spread out upon the turf; and, letting himself down with the deliberation of a buffalo about to retire for the night, Lieutenant Porgy prepared for the discussion of his dinner.

It was scarcely such as would satisfy either the tastes or appetites of epicurism. Porgy growled as he ate. The beef was hard and black, sun-dried and sapless. The biscuits were of corn-meal, coarse, stale, and not palatable even to the hungry man. But the tiger was earnest, and the food rapidly disappeared. Frampton ate but little. His heart was too full of excited hopes to suffer his appetite to prevail. It would be doing injustice to Porgy to suppose that he was glad to behold this abstinence. Though fully equal, himself, to the consumption of the slender provision before them, he was sincerely urgent that the youth should feed.

“Why don’t you fall to, boy! Do you suppose there’s not enough for both? Eat, I say! You’ve done nothing worth the name of eating since last night. Eat! I know I’m a beast, seeking what I may devour, but understand, that I regard you as one of my cubs, and will see you feed, even before I do myself. Take that other biscuit, and there’s the beef. Cut, slash—it will need a sharp knife, and sharper teeth to get at the merits of that bull’s quarter.”

Frampton complied, or seemed to comply with the command. Meanwhile, Porgy ate on, growling all the while.

“This is life, with a vengeance, and I *must* be a patriot if I stand it much longer! Nothing seems to agree with me! Hand me the bottle, Lance, and run down to the branch with the cup. I believe I should perish utterly, but for the little seasoning of Jamaica which is left. Al!” looking at the small remains of

the liquor in the bottle, "it is now only what the poet calls the drop of sweetening in the draught of care."

"But if it be a draught of care, lieutenant," said Lance archly, taking up the cup, and moving toward the branch, "why do you drink of it so often?"

"So often! When, I pray you, have I drank of it before, to-day?"

"Only three miles back, at the Green Branch."

"Oh! I drank three miles back, at the Green Branch, did I? Well, it was the cup of Lethe to me, since I certainly forgot all about it."

"There couldn't have been much bitterness in the draught, lieutenant, or the taste would still be in your mouth. But, have you forgotten the other cupful at Swan's Meadows, about nine miles back?"

"Do you call that a draught, you ape of manhood, when you know that the Jamaica was just employed to precipitate the cursed clayey sediment of that vile mill-pond water? Get you gone, and bring the water. This *is* good water, and I will have a draught now, a genuine cupful; since the others were only calculated to provoke the thirst and mortify the desire. Away!"

The boy soon returned with the water. The worthy epicure refreshed his inner man; threw himself back upon the green turf, under the pleasant shade-trees, and seemed deeply engaged in meditating the merit of his performances. Lance Frampton crouched quietly on the opposite side of the tree, and, for a little while, neither party spoke. At length Porgy, with whom taciturnity was never a cherished virtue, broke the silence.

"Lance, my boy, you are beginning life monstrous early."

"How so, lieutenant?"

"When do you propose to marry this little girl, Ellen Griffin?"

"Well, sir, I can't say. It's as she pleases."

"Pshaw, fool, it's as *you* please. When a girl consents to be married, she's ready to be married. Lay that down as a law. The consent to marry implies everything; and all then depends upon the man."

"Perhaps—"

"Perhaps I tell you it *is* so, and more than that, I feel

pretty sure that unless you are picked up by a British bayonet or bullet, you'll marry before the war is over."

"I should like it, I own, lieutenant."

"No doubt; no doubt; and you are right. I begin to think that marriage is a good thing. I have wasted many years unprofitably. How many women might I have made happy had my thoughts led me this way before. But I may yet do some good in this behalf before I die. I must marry soon, if ever."

"You, sir!" with something like surprise.

"Ay, to be sure! why not? am I too old, jackanapes?"

"Oh! not a bit, lieutenant!"

"Well! what then? what's to prevent? You don't suppose that I'm fool enough to think of marrying a slight, fanciful, inexperienced thing, such as you desire. The ripe, sir, not the green fruit, for me. I require a woman who has some knowledge of life; who is skilled in housekeeping; who can achieve successes in the culinary department; who knows the difference between hash and haggis, and can convert a terrapin into a turtle, by sheer dexterity in shaking the spice box. There is another quality which a woman of this description is likely to possess, and that is a due and reverent sense of her husband's authority. It is because of her deference for this authority that she acquires her art. She has learned duly to study his desires and his tastes, and she submits her judgment to his own. She waits to hear his opinion of the soup, and is always ready to promise that she will do better next time. I feel that I could be happy with such a woman."

"No doubt, sir."

"The difficulty is in finding such. There are precious few women who combine all the necessary qualities. They are not often native. They come from training. A wise father, or a wise husband, will make such a woman; she can not make herself. Were I, for example, the husband of a girl such as your Ellen—"

"My Ellen, sir!"

"Oh! don't be alarmed, boy; I have no idea of such a folly! But were I the husband even of such a young and inexperienced creature, and did we live together but ten years; were I then

to die, she would be a prize for any man. She should be as absolutely perfect as it is possible with one of a sex, a part of whose best merits depend very much upon their imperfections. Now, this leads me to the reflection that, perhaps, widows are, after all, the best materials out of which to make good wives; always assuming that they have been fortunate in the possession of husbands like myself, who have been able to show them the proper paths to follow, and who have had the will to keep well them always in the traces. I am clearly of the opinion that widows afford the very best material out of which to manufacture wives."

"Indeed, sir."

"Yes indeed! my widow would be a treasure for any man; and if I could only find the widow of a man who in some respects resembled myself, I should commit matrimony."

"Commit!—when you said that, lieutenant, I thought murder was to be the next word, instead of matrimony."

"Did you! You are getting humorous in your old age, my son."

There was a pause, after this, of several minutes: but Porgy resumed, apparently taking up a new topic entirely.

"Poor Griffin! What a loss he must be to his wife! Poor woman! I do pity her! I liked Griffin, Lance. He was very much a person of my own tastes; not so refined, perhaps, not so copious or various, but with an evident tendency my way. Nobody in camp relished my terrapin soup half so well, and, for an ordinary stew, he was admirable himself. We once compared notes for our dressings, and it surprised us both to discover that our ingredients and the quantities were, almost to a fraction, the very same. I liked the poor fellow from that very hour, and he, I think, had quite a liking for me."

"That he had, lieutenant!"

"I am pleased to think so, Lance. Many of his other qualities resembled mine. He was generous, and spent his property in too great a hurry to see which way it went. He was a man of character, and detested all hypocrisy. He was a man of will, and when he put his foot down, there it stuck. It was law. I

have not the slightest doubt that poor Mrs. Griffin is an admirably-trained woman."

There was a pause, in which Porgy himself rose, took his cup and bottle and went down to the brooklet, saying—"Thinking of poor Griffin, I will drink to his memory."

He soon returned and resumed the subject, somewhat, we should fancy, to the annoyance of his companion.

"I am of opinion, Lance, that Mrs. Griffin, when a girl, must have greatly resembled your Ellen. She has exactly the same eyes and hair, the same mouth and chin, and, allowing for the natural portliness of a woman of thirty-five, very much the same figure. She is a fine-looking woman now; and in her you will be gratified to see what her daughter will be twenty years hence. If she has trained her as she herself has been trained, you will have every reason to be satisfied. Did you ever observe, when Mrs. Griffin was in camp with us on the Santee, how frequently I dined in Griffin's mess? Well, it was in tribute to her excellent merit in preparing the dinner. Her husband shared the labor, it is true, and I sometimes contributed my counsel as an amateur. This, no doubt, helped her very much; but that should not be allowed to disparage her real merits, since, to be satisfied to submit to good counsellors, shows a degree of wisdom, such as ordinary women seldom arrive at. Poor woman! how I pity her! How such a woman, so meekly dependent upon her husband, can endure widowhood, is very problematical!"

There was another pause, Lance Frampton being heard to turn uneasily behind the tree, when Porgy resumed—

"Yes! the truth is not to be denied. I have been quite too selfish! I might have made many a woman happy—I might have carried consolation to the heart of many a suffering widow! I have lived thus long in vain. I must make amends. I must sink self, in the sense of duty!—Come, Lance, saddle the horses, lad, and let us be riding."

CHAPTER XL

GRIEF—BACON AND EGGS.

IN less than two hours, our companions reached the humble farmstead which the widow Griffin occupied. The dwelling was a poor cabin of logs, with but two rooms, such as was common enough about the country. The tract of land, consisting of two hundred acres, was ample for so small a family. This property, with a few head of cattle, a score of hogs, several of which lay grunting in the road in front of the entrance, and other trifling assets, were the bequest of a brother, a cripple, who died but a few months before, and whom Mrs. Griffin, with her daughter, had gone from the camp of Marion to attend in his last illness. The place had a very cheerless aspect. The fences were dismantled, the open spots of field grown up in weeds, and some patches of corn, from which the fruit had been partially stripped already, stripped, indeed, as it ripened—added rather to the cold and discouraging appearance of the place.

Our companions did not, at once, and boldly, ride up to the habitation. They were too well practised as partisans for such an indiscretion. When within half a mile of the dwelling, they turned into the woods, made a partial *detour*, and while Porgy remained under cover, Lance Frampton stole forward, on foot, to reconnoitre. The horses, meanwhile, were both fastened in the thicket.

Lance was absent about a quarter of an hour only, but long enough to make his superior quite impatient. The youth, though eager to gain the cottage, was yet too well trained to move incautiously. He had carefully sheltered himself in his approach, as well as he could, by the cover of contiguous trees. These had been allowed to grow almost to the eaves of the

building, in front and rear, affording an excellent protection from the sun, which, as the house was without a piazza, was absolutely necessary for comfort in such a climate.

The door was open in the rear of the building, and the first glimpses of it showed Lance the person of his pretty sweetheart, sitting just within it, busily engaged with the needle. The youth, his heart beating more than ever quickly, glided forward with increased stealthiness of tread, in the hope to surprise her. To creep beside the building, until he had nearly reached the doorway, and then, with his cheek against the wall, to murmur her name, was the simple art he used. She started, with a slight cry, at once of pleasure and astonishment, and exclaimed—

“Oh! Lance! Is it you? How you scared me!”

“I did not mean to scare you, Ellen.”

“To surprise me so,” continued the girl: “and I without stockings on;” and with a blush, she drew the delicately-formed white feet beneath her dress, but not before the eye of the youth had rested upon their whiteness.

“And how’s father? where did you leave him?”

Lance was silent. The gravity of his face at her question did not escape her. She spoke eagerly—

“He’s well, Lance, ain’t he?”

“Where’s your mother, Ellen?”

“In the room.” She pointed to the chamber.

“Well, I must go and report to Lieutenant Porgy. *He’s* here. He’s got letters for your mother. There’s been no British or tories about?”

“Yes: they’ve been about, I hear. Some passed up yesterday, by the other road. But all’s safe hereabouts now, I reckon.”

“I’ll run, then, and bring the lieutenant. He’ll be mighty tired of waiting.”

“But you haven’t told me about father, Lance!”

“No!” said he, hesitatingly, “the lieutenant will tell you all.”

“But he’s well, Lance—he’s well? You haven’t had any fighting, have you!”

“Wait awhile, Ellen,” he answered as he hastened away, and

his evasion of the inquiry at once alarmed the quick instincts of the girl. She called immediately to her mother.

“Oh! mother, there’s news from camp, and I’m afeard it’s bad news.”

“Bad news! Ellen,” answered the mother, coming forth.

“I’m afeard; for Lance has just been here, and, when I asked him about father, he would tell me nothing, but has gone out to call Lieutenant Porgy, who is here too in the woods.”

“Lance would n’t bring bad news, Ellen.”

“Not if he could help it, mother; but why didn’t he answer me when I asked after father; and why did he say that Lieutenant Porgy would tell us all?”

“Lieutenant Porgy—he’s here too?” said the mother, smoothing her cap and apron. “If it was bad news, Ellen, we’d hear it soon enough. It’s never slow to travel when it’s bad.”

“I’m sure father’s hurt; something’s the matter. They’ve had a battle; and why didn’t he write?”

“Well, I don’t know; but maybe he did write.”

“But, if he did, would n’t Lance have brought the letter the first thing?”

“Maybe the lieutenant’s got it! Don’t be foolish, Ellen. I don’t think Lance would be the one to come with bad news.”

“Oh! I know he’d be sorry to do so; but, mother, he looked sorry enough when I asked about father, and he spoke so little.”

“Come, child, you’re always thinking of the cloud before it comes! That’s not right. Go, now, and look up something for Lance and the lieutenant to eat. I reckon they’ll be precious hungry. Put on a pot of *hominny* at once, and kindle up the fire, and get down the gourd of eggs, while I slice off some of that bacon. I don’t think there’s any bad news. I don’t feel like it! God knows we’ve had sorrow enough to last us now for a long time, and I ain’t willing to believe that we’re to suffer any more on a sudden. Come in, Ellen, and stir yourself; that’s the way to lose the feel of trouble. Don’t be looking out for *them*”—meaning the men—“it don’t look quite proper for a young girl, Ellen.”

“Oh! mother, how can you——”

The sentence remained unfinished. The girl obeyed, and was soon busied with the domestic preparations which the mother had suggested. The pot of hominy was soon upon the fire, the eggs laid out upon the table, and Mrs. Griffin herself, with a somewhat unsteady hand, prepared to cut from the shoulder of bacon the requisite number of slices. She was interrupted while thus employed, by the arrival of the expected guests. Her agitation, when she received them, was not less great, though less conspicuous than that of her daughter. The poor woman seemed to fancy that a certain degree of hardihood was essential to proper dignity. It is, indeed, a characteristic of humble life among the people of the forest country of the south and southwest, to assume an appearance of stoicism under grief, in which they resemble the Indian; appearing to consider it a weakness of which they have reason to be ashamed, when they give vent to their natural emotions under affliction. In like manner, it is their habit to suppress very much their show of impatience, particularly when they are conscious of an active and growing curiosity. Mrs. Griffin felt fully the anxieties of her daughter, but her training was superior to the nature which strove within her. She met her visitors with the air of one who had nothing to fear; and, that she really felt anxiety, was to be seen entirely in the measured and cold manner with which she welcomed them.

"I'm glad to see you, Lance. I'm sure you're welcome, lieutenant; sit down. You must be mighty tired with your long ride in this hot weather."

"Tired and hungry, and thirsty and sleepy, all together, Mrs Griffin, I assure you. And how is Miss Ellen? has she no welcome for an old friend?" was the reply of Porgy.

The girl, who had hitherto hung back, now advanced and put her hand shyly within his grasp, but said nothing.

"Ah! you are still as bashful and still as pretty as ever, my little damsel. Don't be shy of me, my dear creature. I need not tell you that I am old enough to be your father; and I feel that I could love you like a father. You would hardly think, but I have a heart full of the milk of human kindness. It might have been better, perhaps, for me, in a mere worldly point of

view, had I less. But I am content. The feelings which I possess are more precious to me than vaults of gold and wagons of silver." He released her hand as he spoke this, and, addressing Mrs. Griffin, proceeded as if the girl were no longer in hearing.

"Ah! madam, what a treasure to you to have such a child as that. She is all gentleness and sweetness, and all duty, I am sure."

"She is, indeed, a blessed child. There are few like her, Lieutenant Porgy."

Ellen stopped not to listen to her own praises thus began, but stole out, closely followed by Frampton. Porgy, obeying the repeated request of his hostess, proceeded to take a seat, while the good woman, having finished slicing her bacon, and thrown it into the frying-pan, laid the implement upon the table conveniently beside the eggs, and, having looked at the pot of hominy, given it a stir, and pushed up the brands beneath it, drew a chair near the fireplace, and, folding her hands in her lap, assumed, unavoidably the look of a person in waiting and expectation.

The lieutenant surveyed her curiously as she sat thus, her eyes bent upon the ground, and only raised occasionally to look at the fire. Mrs. Griffin was a comely woman, not much beyond the middle period of life, and, as thus she sat, plainly, but neatly dressed, with a face smooth yet, and fair, and with the bloom of health upon her cheeks, our lieutenant inwardly said—

"Verily, the woman is well to look upon."

His conviction took a somewhat different shape when put into words.

"Mrs. Griffin, you are very comfortable here; that is, you might be, with health and youth, and a pleasant abode—one that may be made so, certainly—but, don't you find it very lonesome?"

"I'm used to it, lieutenant."

"Yes, indeed; and that is fortunate. To be accustomed to lonesomeness is to be independent, in some degree, of the changes of life. Solitude, once familiar to the mind, ceases to be oppressive; and who is sure against solitude? We may have a large

number of relatives and friends, but what is to secure us against the chance of losing them? We may have a full house to-day, and all shall be silent and cheerless to-morrow. Such are life's vicissitudes. It is fortunate, therefore, when one has been prepared already for such privations. Misfortune, then, can do us little evil, and should death steal into the household——"

"Death! Lieutenant Porgy?"

"Yes, Mrs. Griffin, death. We must all die, you know. One will be taken away, and another will be left, and the survivor will have need——"

"Lieutenant, a'n't you just from the camp?"

"Not very long, ma'am."

"And my husband—didn't he write—didn't he know that you were coming into these parts?"

"Why, no, ma'am, he didn't write—he didn't know—he——"

"Lieutenant, there's something you've got to tell!" interrupted the woman. "Speak to me, now that Ellen's not here. Let me know if there's anything the matter with my husband."

"Well, Mrs. Griffin, I'm sorry to say that something is the matter," replied Porgy, seriously—the earnest, sad, almost stern manner of the widow impressing him with solemnity, and compelling him, by a natural intuition of what was proper, to forego all the absurdities and affectations of speech which a long indulgence had rendered, in great degree, habitual. He continued—

"You are a strong woman, Mrs. Griffin; you have seen much trouble and sorrow, and you must be prepared for more."

"Tell me!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands and bending toward him. "Tell me! Don't keep me in this misery."

"We have had a battle, Mrs. Griffin." Here he paused:

"And he was killed!—he was killed!" was her cry.

Porgy was silent. His eyes were cast upon the floor.

"Walter Griffin! Oh, my God! my poor, poor Walter! He is dead—he is dead! I shall never see him again!"

The head of the woman fairly dropped upon her knees, while strong, deep sobs broke from her breast, with occasional ejaculations.

"Walter, Walter, my poor, poor Walter!"

Porgy did not reason unwisely when he forbore all effort at consolation. He took the opportunity, now that she seemed to be in full possession of the fact, to relate the particulars.

“He died like a brave man, Mrs. Griffin, in battle against the enemies of his country!”

“Ah! I know’d he would. Walter was a true man. He had the heart of a lion in him!”

“That he had, indeed, Mrs. Griffin. I will bear witness to his courage and his manhood. He was a brave, generous, whole-souled fellow—a good companion and an excellent friend.”

“Oh! yes! Poor, poor Walter! But you don’t know half what he was to me, when there was nobody and nothing!—ah! how could you know? And what is to become of us now!—my child—my poor Ellen, fatherless here, in these cruel times, and in these lonesome woods.”

“Ah! Mrs. Griffin, remember you are a Christian. Trust in God brings with it the best of promises. He tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. You will never want a protector, I am sure, and your sweet and gentle daughter will surely find a father and many friends.”

“Oh! I don’t see *where*, lieutenant; we are very poor, and very unbefriended. If the war was over, and the people would come back to the settlements!”

“The war will be over before very long; the people will surely come back to the settlements. You will have many and kind neighbors; and I can promise you, Mrs. Griffin, one among them, who will be as true a friend to you as he was to your husband. Let peace be restored to us, and if my life is spared me, I mean to live in this parish. I will be your friend. I will protect your daughter. I will be a father to her, out of the love I bore to her father.”

“Oh! lieutenant, I thank you for your kindness, from the bottom of my heart. I reckon you will be as friendly as anybody in the world; but there’s no such thing as replacing the husband and the father, and making us feel as if we had never known the loss. Oh! Walter Griffin, I was dubious always that you would be killed by the enemy! I know’d how venturesome he was, lieutenant. I told him he ought not to be

rash, for the sake of his wife and daughter ; and it's all turned out as I warned him. My God ! what are we to do now, here in this lonesome wilderness ! I don't see ! I don't see ! I feel as if I could lay right down and die."

"Don't give up, Mrs. Griffin. There's no help in despair. Death must come, at last, to all of us. It might be Griffin or it might be me. It might be on the field of battle, or it might be here in bed. We can't know the moment when the summons must be heard, and we must resign ourselves with philosophy, to a fate from which there is no escape. There's no use in sorrow."

"Oh ! but who can help it, lieutenant ! I know there's no bringing Walter back ; but that don't make me feel easier because he's gone. If I didn't cry, my heart would be sure to burst."

Her speech throughout, was broken by continual sobs and wailing. The evidences of real feeling were quite too conspicuous to suffer Porgy to indulge in any follies, and what he said, by way of consolation, was respectfully and kindly said, though as usual in such cases, of no value. At length, he bethought him of Singleton's letter, and the money intrusted to his care.

"It ought to be a great satisfaction to you, Mrs. Griffin, that Walter had so completely won the love of everybody in camp. I've seen the colonel himself standing over him, with the big tears gathering on his cheek, as he listened to his last words. The colonel has written to you in this letter."

"God bless him ! Colonel Singleton is a good man, and Walter loved him very much. Read the letter for me, lieutenant, for I'm too blind to see the writing."

The letter of consolation was read accordingly. It set the stream of tears flowing anew.

"Really," thought Porgy as he watched her, "a most exemplary woman. It is pleasant to think that we shall be thus wept and remembered when we are no more."

This reflection led to another. "What a profitless life is mine ! Were they to assign me my last tenement to-morrow, I doubt if a single eye would give out water ; unless, indeed, this youngster, Lance, and possibly, Tom, the cook ! Verily, ^{his}

thing must be amended. This poor woman is the very person to whom I must administer consolation, and from whom I must receive it. But, not now! not now! We must give ourselves time. She feels her sorrow, that is clear, and does not merely feign it; but the stream flows too freely to last over long; and the fountain that exhausts itself quickly, will soon feel the need of new supplies."

Such was the unspoken philosophy of our epicure. He really persuaded himself that the sort of consolation, which he proposed ultimately to offer to the widow, was the proof of a certain virtue in himself. He congratulated himself with the conviction, that he was about to do a charitable action. An interval in the grief of Mrs. Griffin allowed him to place in her hand the ten guineas which had been sent her by Singleton, Griffin's watch, and some other trifles which he brought. She gave them little heed, emptying the gold upon the table, and putting the watch into her bosom. Then, as if Singleton's letter had yet to be read, she turned it over, and appeared striving to possess herself of its contents. But she handed it, a moment after, to Porgy, saying—

"I can't see the letter!" What does the colonel say, lieutenant?"

He again commenced the perusal of the letter, but had scarcely compassed a sentence, when hasty feet were heard at the entrance without, and, in the next moment, Ellen Griffin and Lance hurriedly entered the apartment. Both seemed very much agitated. The eyes of the girl were red with weeping, and the big drops yet stood upon her cheeks. But there was little time allowed for observation.

"The red-coats, lieutenant—the British!"

"Where?"

"Not a quarter above, coming down at a walk, dragoons, more than fifty that I see! We must cut for the bushes. We'll have time, if we move at once, but we must run for it."

"The devil! run! as if I had not an infirmity in my heel, like that of Achilles!"

"Shut the front door, Ellen," cried the prudent Mrs. Griffin.

"Better gather up these guineas, Mrs. Griffin," cried Porgy,

"or the British will swear to the stamp. Lance, my boy, can we find cover all the way back?"

"Pretty much! There's a bend in the road above, just here at the corner of the cornfield, where there is a piece of woods that screens us for awhile, and if we get beyond that, we're in the thicket. But we must put out at once."

"To be sure we must! Mrs. Griffin, with your permission we'll withdraw the temptation of this bacon and these eggs from the eyes of these rapacious red-coats. We must not feed, or give comfort in any way to the enemy. Lance, tumble these eggs into the frying-pan—it already contains the bacon, and take it on your shoulder. I will take possession of the pot of hominy."

"But I have my rifle, lieutenant."

"What of that! carry both, can't you? I have my sword, do you see; yet, I mean to take the pot also."

"We must be in a hurry, lieutenant," said Lance, swinging the frying-pan, laden with eggs and bacon, over his left shoulder, and grasping his rifle in his right hand.

"Oh! yes! better go!" cried Ellen, entreatingly, who divided her time between a watch through the cracks of the door and her lover. Wiping her eyes with her apron, Mrs. Griffin hurried their departure also.

Porgy had already seized upon the hangers of the hominy pot, and was unbuckling his sword, to carry in his hand, that it might not embarrass him in walking. The sounds of the approaching horse were beginning to be faintly heard, as the two partisans stepped out of the door in the rear of the building, each armed after the fashion described, and stealing away under the shelter of the trees.

It required no extraordinary haste, for the British came slowly down the road. This was fortunate, since Porgy was not the man to fatigue himself in flight. He would much prefer to encounter odds in conflict at any time. His portly figure presented quite a picture, such as Cruikshank would have painted *con amore*, rolling, rather than striding, away beneath the trees, his sword in one hand, thrown out at right angles with his body, the better to preserve that balance which was necessary to his

carrying the hominy-pot at a proper distance from his breeches. Mrs. Griffin and her daughter watched the two from the back door for awhile ; then, as the nearer approach of the British was heard, closing the entrance in the rear as well as the front, and they prepared within for the possible necessity of receiving unwelcome visitors. The money, just received, and watch, with certain other portable treasures, were dropped down within a secret hollow in the floor ; and, with a hope that the enemy would pass by without pausing, the widow and the daughter both sat down, seemingly busied in knitting and needle-work.

But they were not thus destined to escape. The dragoons in advance stopped at the entrance of the dwelling, and, as the several divisions came up, they paused also. There was some delay, during which all was anxiety in the hearts of the widow and her daughter. A knock followed at the door, and a voice of authority demanded entrance. It was immediately thrown open by Mrs. Griffin herself, while her daughter sought shelter in the chamber. Let us leave the widow with her unwelcome guests while we follow the footsteps of our lieutenant and ensign into the forest.

CHAPTER XLI.

PORGY PROVES POT-VALIANT ONLY.

THE two partisans, laden as they were, the one with the pot of hominy, the other with the frying-pan, made their way to the woods with all despatch, and without detection. Fortunately, as we have said, the forest cover extended almost to the cottage. Our fugitives soon satisfied themselves that they were in a place of security, though but a few hundred yards from the dwelling. They were in a tolerably close covert, on the slope of a moderate hill, at the foot of which stole off a slender brooklet, the child of a great bay or wooded pond, that covered a hundred acres, more or less, a quarter of a mile distant. Here Porgy paused. He had found his pot of hominy, precious as it was, an incumbrance. He laid it upon the ground, cast down his sword beside it, drew a long breath, and wiped repeatedly the perspiration from his brows. Lance Frampton followed his example; and the youth, at the bidding of his superior, proceeded to strike fire in his tinder-box, which he brought from his horse furniture; the two steeds being fastened still farther in the woods, where, still bitted and saddled, they were allowed to nibble the grass, which was now tolerably rank. The fire kindled, and the pot set to boiling anew, Frampton proposed that he should take an observation—in other words, see how the land lay with the enemy.

“Ay, do so, lad. You are of no use here. You have no merits in the kitchen. I will do the cooking, for which I flatter myself I have a native faculty, and, if you do not stay too long, you will find your share of the dinner in waiting for you. And

look ye, Lance, boy.—don't forget your business, in your anxiety to have a chat with Ellen. Many a poor fellow's heart has been pampered at the cost of his head. Be on the lookout, for if caught, you will be trussed up to the first tree, hung against all odds, as no better than a spy; and I sha'n't be there to hear your last confession. Be off, at once, and show yourself back again as soon as possible."

The lad promptly acted on this permission. He sped away with the lightness of a deer, though with the cunning and caution of a much smaller animal. Porgy, meanwhile, went on cooking. In this province he was at home. His pot began to boil; with the aid of his *couteau de chasse* (vulgarly Jack-knife), which the partisans all wore as habitually as the sailors, he converted a bit of cypress clapboard, which he found convenient to his hand, into a *hominy-stick* (an article of which our northern friends know nothing, unless, perhaps, as a *baster* or *paddle*, as a substitute for school-birch, when an unruly urchin is to be admonished) with which he stirred the simmering grist, and occasionally drew it up for inspection. His eggs and bacon, meanwhile, lay ready in the frying-pan, to be clapped on the fire the moment that the hominy had reached the proper consistency. In these operations, our *cuisinier* was singularly deliberate. He knew what a good supper required, and he had no fear of the enemy. His calculations were that the British, on their way to Charleston, had made but a momentary pause; and as they had no suspicions, so far as he knew, of the proximity of any of the Americans, he saw no reason to suppose that they would penetrate the wood sufficiently far to disturb his operations. Besides, Lance was out upon the scout, and of his vigilance, Porgy had sufficient experience. During all these operations and calculations, the soliloquies of our lieutenant were frequent and prolonged. Had we leisure, it would be easy, from his own lips, to prove him equal epicure and philosopher. He mingled his philosophies with his occupations, and dignified the latter with all the charms of sentiment. He was indeed a rare compound of the sensual and the sentimental philosopher.

His hominy was about to assume the degree of consistency which rendered it fit for use, and he was engaged in hauling

away the fire from beneath it, in order to set on the frying-pan, with its contents of eggs and bacon, when Lance Frampton reappeared. The youth was all consternation.

"Oh! Lieutenant, would you believe it? they've got Colonel Walton a prisoner!"

"The d—l they have!"

"Yes! I've seen him myself, sitting in a chair in the hall, under a guard of six dragoons with their pistols cocked and watching every movement. I counted more than seventy dragoons, and I reckon there's quite a hundred. How could it have happened? What's to be done? We ought to be doing something to get him clear!"

"Doing something, boy! What the d—l would you do with seventy dragoons or more? If we save our own bacon, it's as much as we can hope to do. Did the enemy look as if they were suspicious? Do they show any signs of stopping long?"

"Not that I see! They have only stopped to rest and refresh. They've been off to the spring and got some buckets of water for themselves, and most of them are leading their horses to the spring, and rubbing them down. I saw several of them out in the bushes, here and there, but they did not straggle far from the house. But what's to be done for Colonel Walton?"

"What can be done? He's a prisoner, and must wait for his exchange, I suppose, with what philosophy he may."

"Oh, Mr. Porgy, I'm afraid of something worse. I am afraid they'll not treat him as a common prisoner. You remember that they were going to hang him when our colonel rescued him before."

"That's very true," replied Porgy, with increasing gravity; —"that's very true. I had not thought of that. But, whatever may be their purpose with him, we have no power to serve or save him. We must only be on the lookout to see that we ourselves are not gobbled up by these scarlet-bodied dragoons—whether, indeed, they should not be called *dragons* rather than *dragoons*?"

"Lieutenant," said the youth quickly, as if with the resolution suddenly made, "I must hurry off to camp and let our colonel know all about it."

“Why, boy, Singleton’s on the Santee by this time.”

“Yes, sir, I reckon, but I’ll find him.”

“What good in that? Before you find him these dragoons will have their prisoner in the provost in Charleston. There would be some use in it, if there was time enough to enable Singleton to dash between and cut them off before they could get to the city, but that is impossible; and to know that Walton is in the provost, will be only annoying information, quite as pleasant to learn a month hence as now.”

“I don’t know, Mr. Porgy! Our colonel has a good many strings to his bow. I know he has working friends in the city, and has got some plans going on for getting up an insurrection there. Now, he ought to know of this capture, and if I set off at once, by hard-riding, I may give him the information much sooner than he would even hear of it from Charleston. I must go, lieutenant.”

“You shan’t go till you have eaten, boy.”

“I don’t want to eat, lieutenant; I’m not at all hungry.”

“You are a fool! Not eat! defraud the docile animal that walks, rides, toils, fights, for you! send it supperless to bed, when its work is done! That won’t do, boy. You shall eat before you ride. As for riding with you, helter-skelter to the Santee, and at this moment, I don’t do it, for all the Waltons and Singletons between this and Huckleberry Heaven! You may go by yourself, if you choose; perhaps it’s just as well that you should; for, as you say, Singleton has his plans, and conspiracies, and agents, everywhere, and he may do something to extricate his kinsman. But you sha’n’t depart till you have eaten. Indeed, you can not expect to go till the enemy have disappeared.”

“I can take the back track, lieutenant; steal off in that direction, going upward and westward, and then wheeling about and pushing for some of the upper fords on the Edisto.”

“Yes, and defeat your own subject; lose half a day’s time or more in this *roundabouting*; when, by waiting quietly and lying close, for an hour, you may be able to start off on the direct road, without an enemy in the way. Quiet, boy, and eat before you ride. I sha’n’t go with you, mark that. I shall cer-

tainly stay to-night at the house of our friend. I have much to communicate—much to say, in the way of consolation, to this amiable and lovely widow. You may tell the colonel that I shall devote myself to the task, now that Colonel Walton is taken, of saving my little party, and our wagon of stores. My object will be to find Colonel Harden and furnish his command with all that is necessary, rather than risk everything by returning with such an incumbrance. Push up those brands, boy, and turn that bacon. Our mess will soon be ready. What a savory odor! Heaven send that it penetrates no worse nostrils than our own.”

The boy did as he was directed, turned over the slices of bacon in the pan with an air of resignation, while Porgy gave the hominy a finishing stir, and drew the pot from the fire, to enable it to cool. He was thus busied when he heard Lance Frampton give a slight cry, and was astounded to see the youth leap away, at a couple of bounds, putting the brooklet and the bay between them. Just then, a harsh voice, just above him, in the direction of the house, cried out—

“Hoo noo! wha’ would ye be after there, you overgrown divil that ye are!”

Porgy, the *pot-hooks*, with pot depending, still in one hand, and the hominy stick in the other, looked up only to discover a dragoon leisurely marching down upon him, and but a few steps off. He cast his eyes about him for his sword, but it lay where he had been sitting, to the windward of the fire, fully ten paces off. Here was a quandary. The dragoon was in the act of picking his teeth when he first saw him; he was now deliberately drawing out his sabre. Porgy’s glance at his sword, and a slight step backward, moved the Scotchman to suspect him of flight; to prevent which, the latter rushed directly upon him, his weapon now flourishing in air.

The bulk of Porgy, the nearness of the enemy, and the distance at which his own sword lay, forbade the hope of his recovering it in season for his defence, and as the dragoon darted on him, obeying a first impulse, our epicure raised the pot by the hangers, with his left hand, caught one of its still burning feet in the right, and, with a desperate whirl, sent the entire contents

of the vessel, scalding hot, directly into the face of his assailant.

The effect was equally awful and instantaneous. The dragoon dropped the uplifted sabre, and set up the wildest yell of agony, while he danced about as if under the direct spells of Saint Vitus. The hominy stuck to his face and neck like a plaster, and the effort to remove it with his hands, only tore away the skin with it. Porgy was disposed to follow up his success; and, knocking the fellow on the head with the empty vessel, was a performance which was totally unresisted. In the agony of the dragoon, his approach for his purpose was totally unseen. Down he rolled, under the wild shock of the iron kettle; and our hero, congratulating himself with his narrow escape, seized upon the frying-pan, not disposed to lose his bacon as well as his bread, and was wheeling to make off for the woods, when another dragoon made his appearance on the brow of the hill, making swift tracks in pursuit.

"D——n that fellow, Lance," muttered Porgy to himself, "he has left me to be butchered!"

He gathered up his sword, as a point of honor, but still held a fast gripe upon the frying-pan. There was but one dragoon in chase, and if he could draw him yet further into the woods, the noise of the strife would probably alarm no other—that is, if the howlings of the first had not given the alarm already.

Our epicure, as we know, had little speed of foot, and with his impediments of sword and frying-pan in his hands, he made very awkward headway. The pursuing dragoon gained upon him; and Porgy was already preparing to wheel about for the purpose of defence, when his feet tripped in some roots that ran along the surface, and over he went, headlong, the contents of the frying-pan flying forward in all directions. In another moment, and when only half recovering—on his knees still, and painfully rising to his feet—the dragoon stood above him.

"Surrender, ye d——d ribbel, or I shorten you by the shoulders."

Furious at the loss of both meat and bread, Porgy roared out his defiance.

"Surrender be d——d! Do I look like the man to cry *peccavi*

to such a sawney as you? Do your best, barelegs, and see what you'll make of it!"

With unexpected agility, unable to rise, he rolled over at these words, and now lay upon his back, his sword thrust upward, and prepared to parry that of the assailant, after a new fashion of defence. In this situation, no defence could well be made. The exhibition was, in fact, rather ridiculous than otherwise. The abdomen of Porgy rose up like a mountain, seeming to invite the attack. The dragoon, however, did not appear to see anything amusing in the spectacle. He showed himself in sober earnest. His brother soldier groaned hideously at this moment, and he had no reason to doubt that his hurts were mortal. He straddled the prostrate Porgy, and, in reply to his defiance, prepared to strike with his broad claymore at the head of the epicure. His sabre was thrown up, that of Porgy thrown out to receive it, when, suddenly the dragoon dropped lifeless upon our partisan, and the next instant the report of a rifle was heard from the neighboring wood.

"Ah!" cried Porgy, throwing off the incumbent body of his assailant, "that dog Lance; he has not abandoned me; and I should have known that he never would. The rascal—how I love him!"

The next moment Lance Frampton rushed in.

"Up, lieutenant, we have not a moment to lose. That shot will bring all the dragoons down upon us, and we don't know how nigh they are. The horses are ready, not thirty yards off. They've rested well and eaten, and we can soon leave these heavy English drags behind us."

"You're a lad among a thousand! I love you, Lance, by all that's affectionate!"

Then, as he bustled up, with Frampton's help, seeing the scattered eggs and bacon strewn upon the ground, he fairly groaned aloud in the tribulation of his spirit.

"I must lose my dinner after all! And that hominy was as good a pot as was ever boiled. It served a purpose, however; never, in fact, boy, did pot of hominy do such good service before."

But there was no time for trifling. 'This was said while our

corpulent professor, hurrying off under the guidance of his ensign, was making such headway as, in later days, was quite new to his experience. They were both in the saddle, and in full retreat, when the British trumpets, sounding the alarm, faintly echoed through the forest. Pursuit was fruitless.

CHAPTER XLII.

CUTTING THE CARDS.

THE night appointed for the great ball of Colonel Cruden at length came round, and at a tolerably early hour in the evening—for great parties, in that day, convened some hours sooner than at present—the guests began to crowd the spacious and well-known mansion of General Pinckney, on East Bay. This venerable and stately dwelling still stands, one of the many memorials which the city of Charleston has to show, in proof of the troubles and changing scenes of that period of revolution. As we have already mentioned, it had fallen to the lot of Colonel Cruden, who fondly anticipated such a permanence of title as no caprices of revolution could disturb. The dwelling, on the occasion referred to, was splendidly illuminated “from minaret to porch.” The spacious gardens were draped with lights, which were multiplied and reflected a thousand times at the extremity of each avenue, from pyramidal lustres of shining steel, bayonets, burnished muskets, and sabres grouped in stars and crescents.

The *fête* was the great display of the season. It was attended, accordingly, by all who felt a becoming loyalty, and by many who only sought to display it. There were others, besides, whom policy, or the love of pleasure, drew to the assemblage, but who did not sympathize with the common sentiment of the company. In the former category, hither also came Mrs. Singleton and Katharine Walton, governed, in doing so, by considerations of prudence, which were greatly in conflict with every political and social sentiment which filled their bosoms. They were not without countenance from others, their friends and relations. Witty and mischievous as ever, Mrs. Brewton

was the life of the circle whither she went, and made merry with the spectacle which she had not the stoicism to avoid.

Balfour quickly attached himself to Katharine Walton, in spite of the angry glances cast upon them both by *la Belle Harvey*, who looked her loveliest that night, and seemingly looked in vain. Balfour was in the best spirits, though it was remarked that the subdued and grave features of Katharine promised him no encouragement. She had evidently come with the determination to endure passively a certain degree of annoyance in regard to certain leading necessities; and her air was that of a resignation, where will, though sufficiently determined, was yet held in abeyance. Her passiveness of temper decided Balfour. He regarded her seeming submission as an indication in his favor, when greater privileges were to be implored; and his satisfaction in this conviction, almost rendered him gallant. It was in the midst of his attentions, promenading one of the several thronged apartments, that he was passed by *the Harvey*. She was walking with Major Stock. She caught the eye of Balfour, and her eye flashed with increasing fires. As they passed slowly, restrained by the crowd, she whispered him—

“It is war, then, between us?”

“Why should it be?”

“Who is not *for* me is *against* me!” She answered through her closed teeth. “Beware, Colonel Balfour!—I always told you that your danger was from a woman. You shall pay for all this!”

He laughed—full in her face—he laughed; and the next moment the crowd separated them. She regarded his retreating form but a moment, and with a glance full of malignant passions that might have taught even a bolder nature than Balfour that her threat was something to be feared. But he was one of those men whom good success and prosperity make forgetful of all prudence. He was quite too much enamored of Katharine, to care a straw what were the feelings of vexation, disappointment, baffled love or hate, in the bosom of his former mistress.

“What had you to whisper so lovingly to Balfour?” demanded Stock of his companion. “It seemed to amuse him
won’t you?”

"I *did* whisper him lovingly, and that is reason good why I should not tell you what was spoken. He is a person to be loved, is he not?" She did not wait for the answer, but continued thus—"But might he not have shown a much better taste in the selection of his new flame? She positively is not even good looking."

"Is it possible you think so?" asked Stock curiously—"You once thought otherwise."

"Yes, in truth!—But such a stiff, starched, cold, no-meaning sort of person as it is now, as if there were no more blood in her veins than in those of an icicle—is enough to change my opinion. And they speak of her as a very paragon of virtue, a sort of Una, as if it were any merit in ice not to burn."

"My dear Harvey: let me differ with you! You are a beauty in *your* way—indeed, very brilliant and very beautiful; but, by Jove, don't deny that the Walton is a beauty also. You, at least, are bound not to deny it."

"Why, indeed!"

"From policy! Utter such an opinion to other ears than mine, and you will be set down as envious of a rival, and trembling for the loss of empire. Now, Harvey, believe me, *you* can well afford to give the Walton as much credit as anybody else."

"Look you, Stock, I don't care *that*" (snapping her fingers) "for anybody's opinion. I repeat that she is positively homely."

"Now, my dear child, don't be wilful; you must not say so, for another and a better reason. People, then, will be quite as apt to decry your lack of taste as of generosity! But let us on! I have a sneaking notion that a tumbler of punch will be particularly grateful at this moment."

They passed into the adjoining apartment; while, pursuing another route, Katharine Walton—never dreaming that she formed the subject of Miss Harvey's criticism—passed into an opposite room, still attended by Balfour. Let us follow Stock and his companion.

That rousing bowls of punch should be conspicuous objects at a mixed party of males and females, in that day, will something shock the sensibilities of ours. Yet the fact is not to be denied. Major Stock made his way with the fair Harvey into the midst

of a circle surrounding a table upon which stood a richly enamelled vase, holding several gallons of this potent beverage. In goodly-sized cups of filagreed china, the liquor was served out. Filling one of the smallest of these for his companion, Stock provided himself with another of more ample dimensions; the providence of the host always remembering that the capacity of endurance was much greater in some persons than in others. Thus armed, the two made their way to one of the ample windows, at which stood—the centre of a devoted group—the lovely Mary Roupell, another of the loyalist belles of Charleston, of whom we have already spoken. She half sat upon and half reclined against the open window, the sash of which, it so happened, was sustained by a dragoon's sword; the button which usually supported it, having been broken off during the evening.

Stock was a rough and somewhat awkward gallant. He contrived in some way to jostle the sabre, and elbowed it out of the place. The heavy sash fell upon the wrist of Miss Roupell, who screamed violently, and under the extreme anguish of the hurt, fainted. Great was the confusion. The crowd was such as to render the place excessively warm; and the extrication of the lady was, for the time, impossible. In the emergency, greatly excited, and before any one could interfere, our excellent major, seizing upon the mammoth bowl of punch, incontinently discharged its voluminous contents, with admirable dexterity, over her face and bosom. With another scream she came to herself only to swoon again at the condition in which she found her person—saturated with Jamaica, and redolent of sweets that very soon substituted a swarm of flies for a swarm of courtiers. A more considerate friend bore her out of the circle, and, as she recovered, into her carriage. As we may suppose, she never forgave the major. Nor did he escape that evening. Barry's muse was instantly put in requisition for an epigram.

“Ha! ha! ha! decidedly the best thing that I ever heard in all my life,” said M'Mahon, breaking into the circle of which Mrs. Rivington was the centre. “My friend, Major Barry, is a most wonderfu^l genius. Here it is!”

And he repeated :—

“When fair Roupell lay fainting in her pain,
 ‘Oh! what,’ cries all, ‘will bring her to again?’
 ‘What! whist!’ says Stock, ‘but punch—a draught divine;
 ‘Twill ease her pain—it always conquered mine!’”

The company cheered and applauded.

“But that’s not all,” continued M’Mahon. “My friend, Major Barry had another arrow in his quiver. Listen to this—

“Stock, to the lady dearest to his breast,
 Gave the sweet beverage that he loved the best,
 Yet mourned the fault committed in his haste,
 Such goodly physic doomed to such a waste,
 And prays his friends, should fainting be his case,
 They’ll fill his throat and leave unsoused his face;
 A natural error ’twas, that what is good,
 Taken internally for flesh and blood,
 More grateful, too, than any dose beside,
 Should still be good externally applied.”*

The laugh was too great for Stock to withstand. He disappeared by the back stairs, and found his way alone into the garden, which, like the dwelling, was brilliantly illuminated. But he was followed by the merry crew whom he thought to baffle, and, unequal to the encounter with them, he darted once more into the dwelling, and hurriedly made his way through the lobby and into the front portico, resolved on flight to his own lodgings. But he was prevented. At that moment rode up a couple of officers, who proved to be Mad Archy Campbell and one of his lieutenants.

“You, Stock?” asked Campbell.

“Yes, what they’ve left of me! I’ve been doing a d— d stupid thing, and shall never hear the end of it.”

“Well,” said Campbell, “it will keep, then; and I will permit myself to hear it another time. I need you, now. Go and bring Balfour out into the garden. I’ve news for him—matters which must be seen to at once.”

“Get in yourself, then, and see him.”

“Nay, that’s impossible. I’m covered with mud and dust,

* This incident really occurred to Miss Roupell at the ball in question.

and something of a darker stain than either. I've had a sharp brush, and have brought in certain prisoners."

"Have you saved Williamson?"

"Yes; but take my message, and laugh at the laughers. I suppose it's no one worse than Barry."

"D—n him for the meanest of all doggrelists!" was the surly answer, while the major was disappearing. A groom, meanwhile, took Campbell's horse and he glided through the wicket gate into the garden.

Balfour very unwillingly left the side of Katharine Walton, at the instance of Major Stock; but the revelations of Campbell in the garden reconciled him to the interruption of a *tête-à-tête* which seemed to promise him every encouragement.

"Walton here, and my prisoner? Then *she* is in my power! But what did you say of Proctor?"

Campbell, with a gentlemanly reluctance, related this part of his history; that portion of it, in particular, which he had derived from the revelations of the treacherous serving-man.

"Enough! enough!" exclaimed Balfour, "and *he*, too! Ha! ha! Campbell, you are a bird of bright omen. What a lucky cast of your net this has been!"

Cruden was now summoned to secret conference by Balfour.

"It is all as I told you, Cruden. The very worst is true of Proctor. He has gone over to the rebels, was privy to the capture of Williamson, privately whispered his counsels into the ear of Walton, when they were actually trying the general for his life, and has now been captured with Walton. Taken in the very act. Nothing now can save him. He must be tried for his life."

"I know not that, Balfour," said Cruden, somewhat sullenly, "I know you hate him; but he must have fair play. The trial must be had, of course; he himself will desire it; but I trust, for my sake, you will subject him to no indignity."

"He is under guard; he ought to be in custody."

"No! no! I will be his surety that he will not seek to escape."

"Beware! you undertake too much."

"I would undertake nothing if I could avoid it. But he is

my sister's child, Balfour, and I must not abandon him without an effort."

"Make your effort, but see that it does not involve you in any embarrassments with our superiors; particularly as you will scarcely serve him, however much you may sacrifice yourself. But to another matter. You perceive that this capture of Walton places Katharine completely in my power. You will not forego any opportunity of impressing this upon her."

"Truly not: but what is the process?"

"We shall try him for his life, if need be, as a traitor to his majesty's cause, and a spy of the enemy. For that matter, according to Rawdon's maxim, we need not try him at all. We have only to identify his person, and hang him to the nearest tree."

"It certainly is a most fortunate event."

"Yes, indeed! It makes her mine, if there had been any doubt about it before. I am now the master of her fate!"

They left the garden together, having discussed sundry other matters in detail, which need not concern us. Scarcely had they gone, when Moll Harvey rose from the deep thicket of a bower, where she had been crouching, and where she had heard every syllable. Her features were greatly inflamed, and she spoke in a brief soliloquy, but with accents of concentrated bitterness.

"So! thus the land lies, Signior Nesbitt Balfour! and thus I am to be sacrificed! But we shall see! There shall be another party to this game, or the soul of woman never knew the passion of revenge, and never had the courage to enjoy it. We shall see; you may shuffle the cards after your own fashion; but I will cut them after mine."

CHAPTER XLIII.

BALFOUR TRIUMPHS.

IN less than twenty minutes after this conversation, Mrs. Singleton hurried Katharine Walton away from the assembly, though without giving her the reason which prompted her somewhat precipitate withdrawal. She reserved the painful communication for a situation of greater privacy. She was in possession of the evil tidings, which had been brought by Mad Archy Campbell; the patriots, in Charleston, being almost as well served with information as their temporary masters.

Balfour, it may be mentioned, had left Cruden's house, immediately after the conference just reported. He withdrew with Campbell; the circumstances of the case calling for his immediate absence. Cruden returned to his guests, with a brow somewhat graver than before, but without betraying any knowledge which might cause a sensation among the company. He did not oppose the departure of Katharine Walton, and immediately perceived, from the countenance of Mrs. Singleton, that she was in possession of the secret. When the two reached home, Katharine for the first time, remarked in the face of the latter, a stern and melancholy gravity, which struck her as significant of something evil.

"You have heard something—something that concerns me. What is it?"

"I *have* heard something, my child, and something that seriously concerns your peace of mind. Katharine, my child, you have need of all your courage. Read that; your father is in the hands of the enemy!"

Katharine clasped her hands together, and gazed with a wild vacancy of look in the face of the venerable woman.

“God be merciful!” was her only exclamation, as she took the little billet, which had been brought her by the boy George Spidell, written by old Tom Singleton, and which, in a single sentence, contained the whole painful information.

“He is in the provost;” such was the fact contained in the note. “Oh! madam, you will go with me at once.”

“It is midnight, Katharine.”

“Day and night are the same;” answered the other vehemently. “He is in bonds and shall I sleep—in sorrow and humiliation—perhaps, covered with wounds, and shall I not console and minister to him?”

“I doubt if they will give us admission at this hour.”

“Oh! madam, no doubts, unless you would drive me mad. How can they deny the father to the child?”

“We shall need to see Balfour first, to obtain permission.”

“Is this necessary?”

“I take that for granted. They would scarcely admit us at any hour without this permission.”

“Then let us go to him at once.”

“It might be more prudent to wait till morning; but be it as you say. The carriage is not yet put up. We can have it ready in a moment.”

A few moments sufficed for this, and the two ladies were driven at once to Balfour’s quarters. Two sentries guarded the entrance, who gave surly answers to their application to see the commandant. They were denied, and told that he was absent. He had not returned from Cruden’s party. Back to Cruden’s the carriage was driven. There the merriment still continued; gay crowds were passing and repassing, in quick succession, beneath the shining chandeliers and cressets. The garden was now, also, full of crowds. The sight of all this gayety seemed to sicken Katharine.

“Ask quickly, quickly if you please.”

Cruden was sent for, and came out to the carriage.

“The commandant, is he here still, Colonel Cruden?”

“He is not, madam; he left us nearly an hour ago, on receiving some important intelligence.”

“You know it then, sir,” exclaimed Katharine—“my father.”

"I have been informed, Miss Walton."

"And where shall we find Colonel Balfour?" asked the damsel impatiently.

"Most probably at his own house."

"We have been there. He is not there."

"Then I know not, unless at the provost. But would it not be well to wait till morning, ladies?"

"Wait! wait. How can I wait; and he a prisoner?—my father in bonds—perhaps wounded, ill and suffering."

"Nay, I can relieve you on that score. Your father is unhurt. He is not sick, he has received no wounds, and, excepting a few bruises, he has no cause of suffering."

"I must see him, nevertheless, as soon as possible. Oh! madam, will you let them drive to the provost?"

"Surely, my child, we will go thither;" and the carriage was driven off accordingly. They reached the guarded entrance of the gloomy edifice at the eastern extremity of Broad street—“where now the merchants most do congregate”—and were doomed to another disappointment. Balfour was not here, nor could they obtain direction where to find him.

"But you will suffer me to see my father, sir?" said Katharine to the officer on duty, and who treated the ladies very respectfully.

"I am sorry, Miss Walton, that I am not permitted."

"What! not permit the child to see the father?"

"It would give me pleasure to comply, Miss Walton, if this were possible; but the commandant has strictly enjoined that the prisoner is to be seen by nobody."

"Ah! he has been here, then," she exclaimed with bitterness. "He is merciful! It is his humanity that would not have the eyes of the daughter behold the chains about the neck of the father."

"Your father is not in chains, Miss Walton; he is strictly guarded, but subjected to no indignities. Colonel Balfour has said nothing about excluding you in particular. He has only commanded that *nobody* shall be suffered to visit the prisoner unless with his permit. I presume that you will find no difficulty in obtaining this permit during proper hours, in daytime"

"Then we must wait, I suppose; and yet, my dear madam, if you would consent once more to drive to the commandant's quarters."

"Cheerfully, my dear child; cheerfully."

"Thank you, thank you," cried the maiden eagerly, the big tears rolling from her eyes, and falling rapidly upon her hands, which were now clasped upon her knees. A few moments sufficed to bring them once more to Balfour's dwelling, which, as before described, was that fine old mansion at the foot of King street, now in the possession of the Pringle family. The visit was again fruitless. The commandant had not yet returned. They received the same answer as before. In silent despair, Katharine gave up the effort for the night.

"We must wait till morning, my child," said Mrs. Singleton. She was answered by an hysterical sobbing, which lasted painfully, for several minutes, to the great anxiety of the venerable widow. A free flood of tears at length came to the relief of the sufferer, and she appeared patiently to resign herself to a disappointment, for which there was no apparent remedy. The parties reached their abode, and Katharine retired to her chamber, but not to sleep. The rest of the night, indeed, was a long vigil. Slumber never, for a moment, visited the sad eyes of that suffering daughter, and as soon as she could reasonably insist upon another visit to the commandant, she did so. But it was no part of Balfour's policy that she should see him *yet*. He well knew that her excitement would be intense, and that she would be an early petitioner for his indulgence. He determined to avoid her.

"She shall *feel fully* that I am the master of her fate. She shall sue for the smallest privileges, and be made to understand that every concession must have its price. I shall concede nothing too quickly. She shall pay well for every favor."

With this policy he kept out of her way. It was easy to do so; and, hour after hour during that long first day of her father's captivity, did she haunt every abode in the city where it was possible to find the person who kept the keys of his dungeon. It was only at the close of the day, when Balfour well knew that she was half distraught, that he suffered himself to receive her.

When he did so, at his quarters, in the afternoon, his countenance boded no favorable auspice. His words were equally discouraging.

“Miss Walton,” said he, “for the first time since I have known you, do I regret to see your face.”

“Do not say, do not look thus, Colonel Balfour; you will not deny that I should see my father.”

“I know not how I should consent, Miss Walton.”

“Not consent—not suffer the daughter to console the father in his bonds!”

“Were these simple bonds, Miss Walton, were his an ordinary case——”

He paused with well-studied gravity of visage.

“What mean you, Colonel Balfour?”

“Is it possible you do not remember, that you do not comprehend?”

“What should I remember? what should I comprehend? My father is a prisoner, taken in battle, the victim of the chances of war, and must remain in captivity until exchanged; as soon as General Greene, or General Marion, can affect his exchange, I have no doubt——”

He shook his head with great solemnity. She paused.

“Miss Walton, your father is not simply a prisoner-of-war. He is regarded as a fugitive from justice, as one under condemnation of a competent tribunal, against whom judgment of death stands on record.”

“Death! Death! Judgment of death!” she cried wildly, almost fiercely; “Colonel Balfour, you can not mean this! You do wrong, you are cruel, sir, thus to trifle with the feelings of a daughter!”

“I have found no pleasure in speaking that, Miss Walton, which you will be compelled to hear from others. But I can not shrink from a duty, however painful.”

“But you will suffer me to see him?”

“Even this would be an indulgence, which, under present circumstances, I should very reluctantly accord; and, perhaps, make myself liable to much reproach in doing so. His majesty’s government is in possession of facts which go to show that an

insurrectionary spirit is at work within this city, that a conspiracy has been for some time on foot, and that Colonel Walton has been privy to the secret workings of this nest of traitors. My duty forbids that I should suffer them in any way to commune with one whose boldness and daring may give them any counsel or encouragement."

"Oh! Colonel Balfour, I'm no conspirator! I will promise you to take no part with any traitors, or share in any treason. It is the child that seeks her father, to console with him, attend upon him, weep over his captivity, and succor him with love and duty only. I give you the word of one who has never wilfully spoken falsely, that I will convey no message of treason—that I shall in no way partake in any plots of any conspirators."

"Your assurance, Miss Walton, might well satisfy me, as a mere individual. As Nesbitt Balfour, my dear Miss Walton, it would not need that you should give them. Nay, it would not need that you should ask for the sympathy and favor which my heart would rejoice to offer you unasked. But I am not permitted to forget that I am here in charge of my sovereign's interest. I know not the extent of our danger, nor the degree to which these conspirators have carried their designs. Caution becomes necessary to our safety. Distrust of all is now a duty; and you and yours, it is well known, are the undeviating enemies of my sovereign."

Mrs. Singleton, who had said little before, now interposed.

"Colonel Balfour, the hostility of Katharine Walton and her father, to say nothing of myself and all my kindred, has been an openly avowed one, to your king and his authority. That it has been always thus openly avowed should be a sufficient guaranty for the assurance that we make you now, that Katharine Walton will not abuse the privilege she solicits, of seeing and being with her father. Her claim, indeed, is the less questionable, since you proclaim the painful and perilous situation in which he stands. The policy, real or pretended, which should deny her the privilege of consoling him in his dungeon, would be an outrage to humanity."

"So would his death, madam, under a lawful judgment; but humanity is thus outraged daily for the maintenance of right

and justice. But I am not disposed, Miss Walton, to incur your reproaches, however little I may shrink at those of other persons. I will grant your petition; preferring to incur any risk rather than see you suffer where I have the power to prevent it. The order shall be made out that you shall see your father."

"Oh! thank you! thank you!—And shall I have it now?" Katharine asked eagerly.

"On the instant;" and with the word he hastened to the table and wrote.

"This order," he said, will secure you admission at any hour of the day, between nine in the morning and six in the afternoon. You will have something over an hour in which to spend with him to-day."

"Oh! thanks, Colonel Balfour—believe me, I am very grateful."

He smiled with a peculiar self-complacence, which did not escape the eyes of Mrs. Singleton; and taking the extended hand of Katharine, carried it to his lips, before she was aware of his purpose. She hastily withdrew it, while her cheeks reddened with shame and annoyance. He laughed quietly as he perceived her disquiet—a low sinister chuckle which might have been construed to say—"You are coy enough now, my beauty; but there shall be a season which shall find you more submissive." But his lips said nothing beyond some idle words of courtesy and compliment, and as the ladies prepared to depart, he gave an arm to each and assisted them to the carriage. When they had whirled away, he rubbed his hands together exultingly.

"Now, let no lurking devil at my elbow dash the cup from my lips, and mine shall be a draught worthy of all the gods of Olympus! Let her refuse me, and the father dies—dies by the rope! Will she suffer this? Never! She will yield on these conditions: she dare not incur the reproach, even if she had not the strong attachment for her father, of suffering him to perish by a shameful death, when a single word from her would save his life!—And what is the sacrifice? Sacrifice, indeed!"—He passed the mirror with great complacency while he said this.—"Sacrifice, indeed! She will perhaps be not unwilling

to find an excuse for a necessity which gives her such a good-looking fellow for her lord."

"How now?"—aloud—to young Monckton, who suddenly entered the apartment—"what do you wish, Monckton?"

"Major Proctor, sir, was here repeatedly to-day, and seemed very urgent to see you. He came, at last, and brought this letter, requesting that it should be placed in your hands the moment you came in."

"Ha! Well! Lay it down. I'll see to it."

The secretary disappeared.

"Proctor, eh! Well! we have him, too, in meshes too fast to be broken through."

He read the epistle, which, as we may suppose, gave a detailed account of Proctor's captivity, and of what he saw while in the camp of the partisans.

"Pshaw!" said he, "that bird can never fly—that fish can never swim—that story can't be swallowed."

He was interrupted by the entrance of Cruden.

"Balfour," said the latter, "I have seen Proctor. He has been to me—he has been to see you also, a dozen times, he says, but without finding you. He explains all this matter, and very satisfactorily."

"I have his explanation here," was the answer, "and I'm sorry, for your sake, to say, that there's nothing satisfactory about it. His revelations are all stale. He makes them only when he can't help himself; when he knows that Williamson has told the story, and Campbell has told the story, and his own fellow, John, has told the story. They all agree in most particulars, and Proctor supplies nothing which we have not from another quarter, in anticipation of his account. They are all before him."

"But, Balfour, that is not his fault; he sought for you last night and repeatedly to-day."

"How idle, Cruden! Campbell sought for me last night, and so did Williamson; they could find me. Why did not Proctor come to your house in search of me, last night?"

"He did so, and you were gone."

"He was unfortunate; but, in truth, Cruden, his narrative is

without weight, unless supported by other testimony than his own. Look at the facts. He leaves the city without beat of drum. His objects were then suspected, and I sent his man, John, after him. He leads John into an ambush, where the fellow is laid up neck and heels, hurried across the Ashley and the Edisto, with his legs fastened under the belly of a horse; his master meanwhile, with sword at his side and pistols in holster, rides in company with the rebel leaders, Walton and others, and actually takes part in the deliberations which they hold upon the fate of Williamson."

"Does Williamson say this?"

"Swears to it. John, the servant, contrives to escape from his bonds; but Proctor the master, when found, is in the rebel camp and under no restraint."

"But Proctor explains all this."

"Pshaw, Cruden, leave it to the criminal to say, and he will always explain away the gallows. Come in with me, and you shall see all the affidavits."

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE PRICE OF LIFE.

PERMISSION had no sooner been granted to Katharine Walton, then she flew to visit her father. In an agony of tears she threw herself into his arms, and, for a long time, no words were spoken between them. Colonel Walton was the first to break the silence.

“Nay, my child! Kate, my dear, exercise your firmness. There is really no necessity for tears. I am a prisoner, it is true. I am in the hands of the enemy, useless to my country, when every soldier is needful to her cause. This is a great grievance, I confess; but I shall be exchanged as soon as our people shall find a British captive of rank equal to my own.”

“But, is this true, my father? Is it certain that you will be exchanged? Is it sure that you will be regarded only as a prisoner-of-war?”

“And why not? Where is the reason to think otherwise, my child?”

“Oh! if you were sure; but——”

“But what? Wherefore do you hesitate? Who has led you to suppose that such will not be the case?”

“The commandant, Balfour! He tells me that you are to be tried as a fugitive from justice—as a——”

“As a what, my child? Speak fearlessly.”

With choking accents, she answered—“As a traitor and a spy?”

“Ha!”

Walton’s brows were clouded for a moment, but he shook off the sudden feeling which had oppressed him, and answered:

“It was base and unmanly that he should seek to alarm you thus! He has some vicious purpose in it. Even were it true, my child, which it can not be, he should have said nothing of the sort *to you*. He should have felt how cruel was such a statement to a woman and a child.”

“No, no! If it be true, my father, I thank him that he has told me all. Better that I should hear the whole danger at the outset. But you tell me that it is not true. You are sure? You know? Do not *you* deceive me, my father. Let me know all the danger, that we may labor in season to save you from these people.”

“And what can you do, my daughter?”

“Oh! much can be done in all dangers, by love and courage. Devotion, armed with a resolute will, can move the mountain. We are feeble, I know; I know that I am good for little; but you have friends here. There are wise and virtuous citizens here, busy always day and night, in planning measures for the rescue of the country. What they can do for you I can not say; but they will strive to serve you, I am certain. Do not deceive me, therefore; do not suffer me to remain in blind ignorance of the truth until the bolt falls, and it is too late to save you.”

“Be of good cheer, Kate. Dismiss these apprehensions. I have heard nothing yet which should lead me to apprehend that Balfour really designs what you mention. I suspect that he only aimed to impress upon you the great value of his favor, in permitting you to visit me. There is no denying that the British authorities have a sufficient pretext for bringing me to trial; but there would be no policy in doing so. They would gain nothing by it but discredit to their cause. I see no room for fears at present; of one thing, Kate, be sure, that should I ever feel that I stand in danger, you shall be the first to know it.”

“Oh! thanks for that, my father. Do not underrate my strength for endurance. Believe me, I can die with you if I can not save you.”

The father pressed her to his bosom.

“You are the same noble, fearless, loving child, my Kate, that I have ever known you. Believe me, I do not feel or fear the

danger that you speak of; yet I do not doubt or deny that, if the policy of the British authorities lay in putting me on trial for my life—nay, putting me summarily to death—at this moment—there would be sufficient pretext, and no law of right or reason would be respected by them. But their policy, at present, is forbearance, toleration, and a mild government. Revenge or cruelty would only embitter the public feeling, and arouse a spirit in the country such as they could never hope to allay. Enough now, my child, on this subject. Have you heard anything lately from Robert?"

She told him the history of the *ruse de guerre* by which Lieutenant Meadows had been defeated by the *soi-disant* loyalist, Furness; at which he laughed heartily.

"But, of course, you keep this to yourself, my child. I presume it is known to you only. Furness did not appear in the business, except as a loyalist, and if I know Robert Singleton truly, he will not abandon a character so long as it will serve a good purpose. We shall hear more of this Furness, be certain. You have not heard directly from Robert since you parted with him at the 'The Oaks?'"

"Of him, but not *from* him. We were told——"

"Hush! some one approaches."

It was the officer on duty. The evening had closed in, and the time had come for Katharine's departure. She would have lingered—she clung to her father's neck with a renewal of her tears, and it was with some effort that he put her away. When the officer reappeared at the entrance, she met him with dried eyes and a calm exterior, which greatly astonished him. An hour after her departure, Colonel Walton was honored with another, but less welcome visiter. This was Balfour.

"Colonel Walton," said the intruder, in mild and gravely sympathizing accents, "I am truly sorry to find you in this situation."

"As the sentiment honors your magnanimity, Colonel Balfour, at the cost of your policy, I am bound to give you credit for sincerity. I certainly find it irksome enough just now, to be a captive; but it is the fortune of war; it is one of the incidents of our profession, and not the worst."

“But, my regret, Colonel Walton, has its source in the peculiar condition which you occupy as a prisoner. You can not be insensible to the fact that his majesty’s government regards you in quite another character than that of mere prisoner-of-war.”

“Indeed, sir; well!”

“When rescued at Dorchester, you were under sentence of death. That sentence has never been revoked.”

“But was that the sentence of a proper tribunal, Colonel Balfour? Was it not a denial of the right which I had to a proper trial by my peers? Was it not the exercise, by Lord Cornwallis, of a despotic will, in which he sacrificed law and justice to arbitrary authority?”

“I have no right to discuss this question with you. His majesty’s officers here are not prepared to oppose their superiors in matters in which the responsibility is theirs alone. It is the expressed opinion of Lord Rawdon, for example, that all that is necessary, is to indentify your person, and immediately carry out the sentence of Lord Cornwallis.”

“I am truly obliged to his lordship, Colonel Balfour. He does not mince matters with us poor provincials. Well, sir, am I to understand that you concur with him? That you are prepared to carry out his opinion into performance? If so, sir, I have but to spare you the trouble of all investigation, by assuring you that I am the real Richard Walton, colonel in the state line of South Carolina militia.”

“It is my wish, Colonel Walton, to save you. It is therefore that I am reluctant to recognise the opinion of Lord Rawdon. I should much prefer an investigation—that you should have a regular trial, as if no decree from Earl Cornwallis had gone forth; in fact, sir, I am anxious to give you time, that you may reconcile yourself to his majesty’s government, and make your peace with the powers you have so grievously offended. They are not vindictive, and, in the case of one whose private character they have so much reason to respect, they would prefer to be indulgent.”

“No doubt of it, sir; no doubt. Hitherto, they have proved their indulgence in a thousand cases, as well known to you, sir, as to me. Was it an instance of this regard to our sensibilities

Colonel Balfour, that you should deliberately communicate to my daughter the peril in which her father stood—that you should speak of me as a fugitive and spy, and point, as it were, to the ignominious gallows in which I was to be justified as such ?”

The face of Balfour paled at this address. His heart and eyes sank together under the stern questioning of Walton. He spoke stammeringly—

“I had to excuse my reluctance, sir, at suffering her to visit you in prison.”

“And whence this reluctance? Suppose me the condemned criminal, convict, and doomed to the fatal tree; even in such case what ground would there be for refusing the visits of a child to a parent. At such a time, and under such circumstances, she had an especial claim to make them, if, indeed, you recognise humanity as having a claim at all.”

“But, Colonel Walton, you do not know the circumstances; you do not know that there are traitors in this city—an organized conspiracy, including wealth and numbers, who are forever plotting against the peace of his majesty’s government.”

“In spite of all its indulgences and humanities !”

“Yes, sir; in spite of all! These conspirators would like nothing so well as your extrication from bonds.”

“I should be grateful to them for it.”

“No doubt, sir; and what would be my answer to his majesty’s government, if, knowing these things, and knowing how many women are concerned among these conspirators, I afforded them such facilities of communicating with you, through your daughter, as to enable you to make your escape ?”

“A subtle difficulty, Colonel Balfour, but the plea is without substance. All captives will desire to escape from captivity, and all true friends will help them to do so. It is for the jailer to see that they do not succeed; not, sir, by a denial to humanity of what it may justly claim, but by vigilance that never sleeps or tires. Sir—Colonel Balfour, you have done a very cruel thing in speaking to my daughter as you have done.”

Balfour by this time had recovered his native effrontery. He felt his power, and was disposed to assert it. The tone of su-

periority which Walton employed annoyed his *amour propre*, and he answered somewhat pettishly—

“I am willing to think, Colonel Walton, that I may have erred. I certainly have no desire to object that *you* should think so. The error, however, must be imputed to the head only. I had no desire to make Miss Walton unhappy.”

“Let us say no more of it, Colonel Balfour.”

The lofty manner in which this was spoken had in it an appearance of disgust which increased Balfour's irritation. He was doubly vexed that, resist it as he would, he felt his resolution quite unseated in the conference with his prisoner. It was with something of desperation, therefore, that he proceeded to resume the conversation, taking a higher attitude than before; in fact, determined on making Walton fully feel and (as he hoped) fear his situation.

“Colonel Walton,” he said, “I must tell you that you do not pursue the right course to make friends. This tone of yours will never answer. Here you are in our hands, a prisoner. By the decree of our highest local authority your life is forfeited. You are a recovered fugitive from our justice. You are told what is said of our power, having identified you, to subject you, *instantly*, to the doom of death, from which you were once so fortunate as to escape. Yet you take a tone of defiance which rejects the help of those who would befriend you, alleviate your situation, and, perhaps, help you to elude its dangers. Is it wise, sir; or prudent, that you should act thus?”

“Colonel Balfour, I take for granted that you have some meaning when you speak thus. You mean to convey to my mind, in the first place, that you yourself are friendly disposed to me.”

“Undoubtedly, sir; you are right.”

“Well, sir, a profession of this kind from you, sir, in your position, to a person in my circumstances, would seem to say that something may be done—that, in fact, my case is not entirely desperate.”

“I certainly mean to convey that idea.”

“Well, sir, now that we understand each other on this point, may I ask in what manner you propose to exercise this friend-

ly feeling toward me! Clearly, Colonel Balfour, my object is to escape from captivity and death, if I may do so. That I am legitimately a prisoner, I admit; but only a prisoner-of-war. That I am lawfully doomed to die, I deny; yet I do not profess to think myself safe because I am innocent. I frankly tell you, sir, that I do not doubt the perfect coolness and indifference with which the present authorities of the country will commit a great crime, if it shall seem proper to their policy to do so. I am perfectly willing to deprive them of any excuse for the commission of this crime, in my case, if you will show me how it is to be done; and if, in its performance, I am required to yield nothing of self-respect and honor—”

“Oh! surely, Colonel Walton, I am bound to do so. I would not, for the world, counsel you to anything at all inconsistent with either. I have too high a respect for your name and character—too warm an admiration for your daughter——”

“Ah!—”

“Yes, sir, for your daughter, whom I esteem as one of the most amiable and accomplished, as she is one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen.”

“I thank you, Colonel Balfour, but I, who know my daughter well, can readily dispense with this elogium upon her.”

Balfour bit his lips, replying peevishly—

“Colonel Walton, you carry it quite too proudly. I would be your friend, sir—would really like to serve you.—”

“Well, sir;—proceed—proceed!”

“Thus, then, Colonel Walton—having endeavored to show you perfectly your situation, and the danger in which you stand, I declare myself friendly disposed, and willing to assist you. Your case is a bad, but not exactly a desperate one; that is to say, it may be in the power of some persons, so to interpose between the justly-aroused anger of our sovereign, and the victim, as to save him from his punishment.”

“In other words, sir, you, Colonel Balfour, can exercise a sufficient influence with Lord Cornwallis to relieve me from his sentence.”

“Precisely, my dear colonel; that is exactly the point. I may venture to affirm that, besides myself, and possibly Lord

Rawdon, there is no other man or set of men, in South Carolina, to whom this thing is possible."

"I think it very likely."

"And I am disposed, Colonel Walton, to use this influence in your behalf."

"I am very much obliged to you, Colonel Balfour, as I have said; I think it very probable that you may interpose, as you have said, successfully, for my safety, and that no other person that I know, is likely to do so. But, sir, you will suffer me to say, that I am too well aware that I have no personal claim upon you for the exercise of this act of friendship. I certainly can not claim it on the score of former sympathies, or even by a reference to your recognition of my individual claims as a man of worth and character."

Balfour winced at this. He felt the latent sarcasm. Walton proceeded:—

"It is clear, therefore, that I can not expect you thus to serve me, without some special acknowledgments. There must be a consideration for this. The *quid pro quo*, I understand, is not to be overlooked in anything that may be determined upon."

"Really, Colonel Walton, you relieve me very much," answered Balfour. "As you say, you have no personal or particular claims upon me, except, generally, as a man of worth. There have been no previous relations of friendship existing between us. If, therefore, I am moved to serve you, it must evidently be in consequence of certain considerations, personal to myself, which—ah!"

Here he faltered for a moment. The stern but calm eye of Walton was upon him. His own wavered beneath the glance; but the recollection of the vantage ground which he held, restored his confidence, and he assumed a tone somewhat foreign to his spirit, when he resumed what he was saying.

"In short," said he, "Colonel Walton, I can save you from this danger, and I alone: and I will save you sir, upon one condition, and one only."

"Name it, Colonel Balfour," answered Walton calmly.

"Your daughter, sir, Miss Walton——"

"Ah!"

The brow of Walton grew clouded. The air of Balfour became more desperate, as he added—

“Yes, colonel, your daughter! I acknowledge her virtues and her beauties. They have subdued a heart which has never yet trembled at the smile or power of woman. Sir—Colonel Walton, give me the hand of your daughter, in honorable marriage, and you are saved. I pledge my life upon it.”

Walton started to his feet with a burst of indignation which he could not repress. He confronted the commandant with a stern visage, and a voice that trembled with passionate emotion.

“What, sir, do you see in me to suppose that I would sell my blood to save my life! That I would put the child of my affections into bonds that I might break my own! Colonel Balfour, your offer is an insult. You owe your safety to the fact that I am your prisoner!”

“You will repent this violence, Colonel Walton,” said Balfour, rising, and almost white with rage. “You are trifling with your fate, sir. Be warned! Once more I repeat the offer I have made you. Will you give me your daughter’s hand in marriage, and escape your dangers?”

“Never! Let me rather die a thousand deaths! Sell my child—yield her to such——”

“Beware, Colonel Walton! You are on the precipice. A single word—a single breath, and you go over it!”

“Away! sir; away, and leave me!”

“Very well, sir! if the daughter be no wiser than the father, look to it! Your doom must be spoken by *her* lips, if not by your own. That is your only chance!”

Balfour gave the signal at the close of this speech, to the keeper of the door without, and as soon as it was opened to him, he rushed out with feelings of fury and mortified vanity, such as he had not often endured.

“He means to offer this alternative to my child—this dreadful alternative! But no! she shall never be made the sacrifice for me! Richard Walton can not accept the boon of life, however precious, at the peril of his child’s peace, and to the ruin of her best affections!”

Such was the stern resolution of Walton, spoken aloud, after

Balfour had retired. He felt that his peril had greatly increased in consequence of the passion which the latter declared for his daughter. He now well understood his game. The danger lay in the bad character of the commandant, and the general irresponsibility of the British power, at present in the state, the recklessness of its insolence, and the conviction which its representatives generally felt, however blindly, that there was no fear to be entertained that they were destined to any reverses. Walton's mind promptly grasped all the circumstances in his case, and he deceived himself in no respect with regard to the extremity of his danger; but the result only found him more resolute in the determination he had formed so promptly, to perish a thousand times rather than suffer his daughter to make such a cruel sacrifice as that which was required as the price of his deliverance.

CHAPTER XLV.

ULTIMATUM.

WHEN, the next day, Katharine Walton presented herself in her father's dungeon, he had reached the course which he had resolved to pursue by which to defeat the desires of Balfour.

"Kate, my child," said the father, as he pressed her affectionately to his bosom, "there is a matter upon which I must speak with you in advance of all others. You are engaged, I know, to Robert Singleton. But ties of this sort, unless the heart really furnishes the cement between the parties, are perhaps better broken than maintained."

"Broken, father! You surely would not have me break faith with Robert!"

"By no means, my child, if you really feel that you love him beyond all other men, and if your confidence in his judgment and honor be such as to enable you to repose with perfect reliance upon his bosom. It is this very question which I desire to urge. Are you as quite satisfied this hour with the engagement made to Robert as in the hour when you first consented to it? Is there no falling off of faith — no coldness, no indifference, no distrust between you?"

"None, father. But wherefore do you ask? Surely, you do not hold me so fickle as to—"

"No! no! Kate, my precious! I have no such suspicions; and your answer, as it concerns yourself, is perfectly conclusive. And now tell me of Robert. Are you quite satisfied with him? Is he still, so far as you know, as faithful, as devoted to you as you feel yourself to him? Have you no neglect, no coldness to

complain of? Does he still appear to you the man of honor, of character, and of high sentiment that we have hitherto always thought him?"

"I have never once fancied that *he could* change, my father. Robert has always been, to my mind, the ideal of a noble and faithful gentleman."

"Enough, then, on that subject. My opinion and estimate of Robert Singleton have long been the same as yours. Your feelings remain the same as ever: your engagement must be equally obligatory. And now, Kate, assure me on your sacred word—nay, I must have it on the sacred volume, my child—that, while Robert Singleton lives and continues true to his pledges, you will never wed with any other man!"

"Say this—*swear* to this, my father! Oh, how can it need that I should do so? Can you, indeed, require that I should take such an oath?"

"Kate, my child, I am but taking a precaution against events. There are some things which, as yet, you do not know, and which I shall be the last person to unfold to you. I do not doubt your affections, my child, or your principles; but I see certain contingencies ahead, which, but for the support I desire to give you by the oath which I now propose to administer, might find you feeble, and seem to force you to a faithlessness which your own heart would abhor. You might find it necessary to rupture your ties with Robert, and, perhaps, give your hand to another person."

"Never! never! Oh, my father, how can you so think of me? What contingencies can possibly occur to make me so base and so faithless to Robert!—so false to my own heart as well as pledges?"

"As I have said, Kate, I foresee that which you do not suspect. I foresee trials of which you have no fears. I do not question your faith, your love, your sense of duty, your principles. Your truth is one of the most precious convictions in my heart. But I distrust your *strength* under certain circumstances, and would wish to give it succor at the moment of your trial. The process for doing so is the one that I have resolved upon. Do not you doubt me, my child, or question if I have sufficient

reason for what I do. If still devoted to Robert Singleton, preferring him to all the world of men, and still confident of his integrity and nobleness, it can not give you pain to renew to me, in the most solemn manner, in his behalf, the pledges already made to him. Submit to me, my child, and believe me that there *are* necessities for this proceeding of which I may not speak to you. This Bible which you have brought me is your dear mother's. She has kissed it a thousand times. Take it to your own lips while I adjure *you*, and you promise me, that, so long as Robert Singleton lives and without loss of character, you will wed no other man, no matter what events may happen to make it appear politic to do so; though death, though danger, though wrong, contumely, and murder even, should threaten yourself and others most dear and precious to you! Swear to me, my child, and remember all my words, for there may come a moment when you may discover that the very meanest of them has a value. Will you not do for me what I require, my child?—what I entreat?"

The maiden took the sacred volume in her hands. She looked bewildered and confused; but she spoke—

"I will do as you require, my father. I should be wretched, however, to suppose that you doubt my faith, and deem it necessary thus to make it steadfast."

"I do not doubt your faith; but you little dream in what manner it is to be assailed. I would really seek to strengthen *myself* in the conviction that nothing which may happen shall prevail to separate you and your cousin."

"And nothing shall, my father, while Robert remains faithful to his pledges. I will take the oath which you propose. It is sworn. I have pressed my lips on pages which my dear mother has made doubly sacred by the frequent pressure of hers. I solemnly vow that no other man shall have the hand which I have given to Robert Singleton."

"I am satisfied, my child. You have relieved me of a dreadful apprehension. But of this I must say nothing. I will not shock your ears by a revelation which I fear that you will be compelled to hear from less scrupulous lips. Be firm in what you have promised, for you are destined to be terribly tried.

And remember that, whatever may happen, your mother and your father, the one a pure spirit, the other a still suffering mortal, are the witnesses of a pledge that they will both expect you to redeem with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."

We need not linger now with our captive in his dungeon. Throughout the long day it was relieved of its gloom, if not made cheerful, by the fond and unwearied attentions of his daughter. Her food was brought her also in his prison, and it was only at nightfall, when required to depart, that she consented to tear herself away. She returned to her home that evening to gather, for the first time, an inkling of the purpose of her father in the solemn requisition which he had made upon her.

Scarcely had the tea-service of Mrs. Singleton been removed, when Colonel Balfour was announced. He was promptly conducted to the parlor, when he desired the servant to say that his visit was made to Miss Walton. Katharine did not long delay in presenting herself.

Balfour was profound in his courtesies. He rose at her entrance, conducted her to the sofa, and seated himself beside her. We dismiss, without notice, the preliminaries, the civil inquiries after her own and the health of other parties, his remarks upon her good looks, and all those usual phrases with which the veteran politician would naturally strive to qualify the effect of more annoying matter. Balfour's hardihood was too great, however, his anxieties too urgent, his consciousness of power too complete, to allow of much delay in approaching the more serious object of his visit.

"Miss Walton," said he, after finishing his prefaces, "I surely need not now inform you that, since I have known you, I have entertained the warmest sympathy for you, and the most earnest desire to see you happy."

The face of Katharine wore its most vacant expression, yet she steadily met his glance. He continued—

"You will do me the justice to admit that, from the moment of your arrival in this city—since, in other words, you have become a ward of the crown—you have been honored with the most respectful attentions. Your health, happiness, and comfort,

have been equally cared for, and your slightest wishes considered, where these did not conflict with the rights of his majesty."

"Colonel Balfour, I do not know what is the nature of the acknowledgment which you desire to extort from me by this speech. It may be enough, perhaps, to say that I have no complaint to offer. I do not acknowledge that my happiness or desires have been at all an object of the solicitude of his majesty's government, as these can not well be consulted in a condition of captivity such as mine."

"Captivity, Miss Walton! Surely not!"

"Surely yes! I regard my situation as one of captivity, the severity of which has been modified only with reference to my sex. Were it left to me, sir, the mountains of North Carolina or Virginia should environ me, rather than the walls of a British garrison."

"I am sorry to hear you speak thus, Miss Walton. I had hoped that the kindness with which you have been welcomed everywhere in Charleston, the respectful devotion of all in garrison, the indulgence—"

"No more, Colonel Balfour. Is it not enough to say that I have no complaints? I utter no reproaches."

"No, Miss Walton; let me say that this is not enough, when it is remembered how small was the claim upon his majesty's indulgence which could be urged by any of your name, or any of your connections. We find them all against us, all hostile in sentiment, and most of them in arms against their legitimate sovereign."

"I am willing to admit all these alleged offences, Colonel Balfour; but whither do your charges tend? I am your captive—my father is in your bonds. Our humiliations have kept pace with our supposed offences. What farther admission would you have me make?"

"Your father's situation, Miss Walton, should surely convince you of our power."

"It is not denied. We are *in* your power."

"We! You! I would it were so! We shall see. Your father *is*, and you must be sensible in what danger. I have spoken of this matter already."

“Yes, Colonel Balfour, you have; and I trust that it is not for the renewal of that communication that you seek me now. I can not believe that, in your calmer and cooler moments, you mean to urge so cruel a subject.”

“But if it be true? If it be that your father is in peril of his life—is—”

“It is not true! It can not be true! I can not doubt that there is humanity enough in the British authorities in this state—magnanimity, perhaps, I should say—to arrest all such murderous purposes, such as you yesterday expressed.”

Balfour shook his head.

“Suppose I tell you, Miss Walton, that you hope against hope? Are you prepared to listen to the whole truth, and without looking with hate and horror on him who speaks it?”

“I know not, sir!—I know not! But, at all events, speak the truth, the whole truth, whatever be the consequences. Have no fears for me. If what you propose to tell me be the truth, it is just as well that *you* should declare it as another. Only let it be *the truth* that you speak, and without any such exaggerations of its mischievous import as the *very generous* of your sex too frequently employ when they would impress the fancies or the fears of ours. If the truth is to be borne, I must bear it and prepare for it as I may.”

“You are sarcastic, Miss Walton—very bitter—”

“Bitter, you say! Certainly a very unnatural savor in the case of one with such a prospect of sweets before her.”

“The prospect is dark enough, I grant you; but not without its light. If I show you the threatening tempest, it is possible that I may also show you the blue sky and the harbor of refuge beyond. Be patient with me, I entreat you, while I do so. I have to speak of gloomy and terrible things; but you shall see that I can point you out the little gleam of light which comes up out of the darkness. What I said to you yesterday was quite true. Your father has nothing to hope but from the mercy of his majesty’s representatives in Carolina. He is a doomed man, as he himself must feel; one who, whether justly or unjustly, is sentenced to a forfeiture of life. That sentence might, from the nature of the case, be carried into effect by any British

officer who found himself in the possession of Colonel Walton's person. He is in *my* possession. I hold this authority to execute the decree of Lord Cornwallis; and what prevails to prevent that I should do so?"

"You will prevent?"

"Ah! You shall hear yet further. We regard these states of Carolina and Georgia as already conquered. Your continentals are even now flying before Cornwallis in Virginia, and Rawdon holds undisputed authority within the interior. Marion, and Sumter, with their ragged followers, will soon share the fate of your father's command. The southern states will all fall into our hands one by one. The New England states no longer supply the armies of Washington and his generals. From the moment that the war was withdrawn from their barren domain, they abandoned the contest. The destruction of a French fleet will effectually cut off another of the allies of rebellion; and your states of the south will perish under the natural exhaustion which is sure to follow from such an unequal conflict. It is mere desperation to hope that anything can be done for saving those states of which we have possession. The struggles of your father and such men are simply suicidal."

"You will not convince *him* of that."

"That is *his* misfortune. But we must bring him to this conviction, as one of the means of saving him. We must persuade him to renounce the conflict and accept the mercy of his majesty."

Katharine shook her head mournfully.

"He will never prove false to his country."

"We shall not ask him to take up arms. We shall simply require him to lay them down, and resume the neutral attitude which he kept until, in evil hour, beguiled to take the field at Camden."

"And if he consents—should we persuade him to this?"

"Something then will have been gained toward restoring him to the favor of his majesty; and, upon certain other conditions being complied with, I think I might venture to say that his mercy—"

"Ah, there are other conditions!"

“Yes, Miss Walton; but such as, I trust, will not be found too difficult for compliance. In fact, my dear Miss Walton, the rest will depend on yourself.”

“On me, sir!” with unfeigned astonishment.

“Yes, on you, and you wholly! The fact is, my dear Miss Walton—I need not perhaps, tell you that, to my discretion, Sir Henry Clinton has confided the whole government of affairs in this section. Mine is the power to bind and loose, to save or execute. The life of your father is in my hands. My voice, my will, can save him; and the question is, what shall be the influence by which I am to be moved to exert this voice and will?”

“Oh, sir!—Colonel Balfour—humanity alone—”

“Won’t do for me! I confess to being a rather selfish man; and when I see before me a great treasure, which I fondly believe I may attain through the exercise or the forbearance of the power I possess, of life or death, I tell you frankly that my selfishness rejects all minor considerations, and insists wholly on the treasure for which it thirsts. Do you not understand me?”

“I confess, sir, I do not.”

“My dear Miss Walton, you have already heard me declare the admiration which I felt for you, and the passion which sought you as its first and only object. You have treated this passion with scorn, unwisely; for I am not the man to suffer tamely. I gladly forget your scorn. I renew my vows of devotion. Once more I fling myself at your feet.”

And the action was suited to the word.

“Rise, sir—rise, Colonel Balfour! I can not suffer this!”

Katharine herself rose; but he seized her hand.

“Nay, my dear Miss Walton, it is thus that you *must* hear me—that I *must* make my confession, and declare the love that I feel for you, and the desire that I cherish to make you mine!”

“Rise, sir! It is impossible!”

He rose, reluctantly.

“Nay, do not say impossible. Do not be rash. Remember all the circumstances in your condition. You must feel the necessity of finding friends at this juncture—of finding such a

friend as myself; one who has the power to destroy; but who may be persuaded to spare and save. Believe me, you have but to say the word, and all the power I possess shall be subject to your will."

"You do but try me, Colonel Balfour. I can not believe so harshly of you as to suppose that you will make a father's life depend upon a daughter's favor. You say you have the power to save him. I believe it. I rely upon you—your sense of justice, your humanity, the obligations that you owe to the people over whom you rule, the policy which becomes the sovereign that you represent. You will not outrage all of these by an extreme exercise of power—by the cruel murder of a noble gentleman, from whom his enemies always found humanity and mercy."

"You plead eloquently, my dear Miss Walton, but the selfishness of my passion will not allow me to listen to your plea. I love you too earnestly not to take every advantage of the circumstances in which you are placed. I can not afford to be magnanimous. I see before me a treasure, the loveliest and most precious that ever blessed mortal eyes, or was intrusted to mortal keeping; and I feel that by the exercise of a certain resolution, that treasure *must* be mine. I can not venture to be generous. I can not fling away, perhaps, the only hope upon which I build for the attainment of this treasure. You must be mine, Katharine Walton, if not through the love you bear to me, through that which you bear your father."

"Oh! Colonel Balfour, this is terrible—it is cruel, it is unmanly—and when you know that it is impossible——"

"I know nothing of the sort! Nay, Katharine Walton, let me tell you freely, I know that there is nothing impossible in a situation like yours. Your father's life hangs upon a thread, as fine, as easily sundered as that by which the spider hangs against the wall. You love your father—I know how precious is the tie between you. Will *yours* be the hand to smite that thread which is his only hold upon life? Will yours be the stern voice which dooms him to a premature and shameful death?"

"No more, Colonel Balfour! You have no right to torture me thus! I will carry the tidings of this wanton cruelty, this

profligacy and tyranny, this equal abuse of power and humanity, to Lord Cornwallis, to Sir Henry Clinton, to the foot of the throne itself! and you shall feel and be made to tremble, in your turn, at a power to which all that you may boast is but a breath, an echo, without either strength or substance. Release my father from this danger, consent to his exchange with some loyalist captive of his own rank, or I expose you to your own superiors!"

"And is it thus, my lovely Katharine, that you defy me, and oppose your feeble strength to mine? You will expose me to Cornwallis and Clinton—you will carry your plaint to the foot of the throne itself! One would suppose, my fair enemy, that you Americans had already sufficiently experienced the unprofitableness of petitions at the foot of the throne and elsewhere. Will you learn nothing from experience? But why should I argue? With the endeavor to convince? The result must prove itself. Miss Walton, the case of your father will undergo investigation within the next three days. When the decision of the court is made, I shall again seek you. Meanwhile, let me commend you to a calmer view of the whole subject. Katharine Walton, you can only escape me at the peril of the loss of all that you most value. On the word of a soldier and a man, your father's life hangs entirely upon your speech."

"You are neither a soldier nor a man, sir, to speak to me in such language. Go, sir; I will not believe you! I will not suffer myself to think that the British authorities will so trample upon all that is precious in humanity, in order that the passions of one bad man shall triumph."

Balfour smiled bitterly.

"You will recall these words. You will repent that you have spoken them. When you rest in my arms, as my lawful wedded wife, Katharine, you will blush for these reproaches, and ask yourself with wonder, how was it that you should have denied soldiership and manhood to your lord; how you should have applied the epithet of *base* to one whose name you bear."

Katharine rose to her full height.

"Enough, sir; I have no more epithets for you! May I hope that you will leave me now?"

This was spoken with a rare mildness of tone and manner. It impressed her visiter. His accents were changed and apologetic.

“You provoke me unreasonably, Miss Walton, and mine is a temper not too placable. It would always yield to you. I will not trespass longer. You have heard me. What I have said is earnestly and truly said. The facts are all as I have stated them. The danger is precisely what I have shown it. The remedy, I repeat, is in your own hands. Think upon it calmly, for you may be assured of this, that I have declared the only conditions upon which your father’s safety depends; and, as I live, I will relax in nothing of what I ask! I love you too passionately to forego a resolution through which only may I hope to bend your stubborn heart to my desires.”

With these words he left her, miserable enough.

“This, then, was the secret of my father’s purpose. Can it be that this base, bad man revealed to him his cruel calculations? But, he dare not—he dare not! Rawdon would not suffer it, nor Cornwallis, nor Clinton. I have but to declare the facts in this interview to shame him before the world.”

Poor Katharine—she little fancied how little responsibility the world feels in such matters—how quietly it submits to the wrong-doing that trespasses not upon its individual limbs or pockets. Still less did Katharine, in her rare simplicity of heart, comprehend the degree of independence enjoyed by British officers when three thousand miles from the throne, or how intimate was the alliance between these worthy agents in Carolina when victims were to be chosen and spoils were to be appropriated.

CHAPTER XLVI.

DUELLO.

EVENTS began to move with unwonted rapidity among all parties in Charleston. Proceedings were initiated against Colonel Walton as a rebel and a spy, and a court of inquiry was designated for an early investigation of his case. Similar proceedings, under charges which were studiously rendered vague, were also appointed for the consideration of another court, soon to be convened, in regard to the case of Major Proctor. He remained still under a nominal arrest only; a forbearance due chiefly to the desire of Balfour to conciliate Cruden and save appearances. But the wily commandant only waited the moment when his game was quite sure, to convert the nominal into an actual arrest, made certain with bolts and fetters.

In the meanwhile, the patriots and friends of Walton were busy, day and night, in studying how to meet his danger, or effect his deliverance. Meetings took place nightly at old Tom Singleton's, and other places. But the consultations of the conspirators only showed them their weakness; and at length, their whole hope of rescuing Walton was based upon a plan for corrupting the keepers of his person. In this work, Mrs. Brewton took an active part, and made the greatest progress of any of her associates. Between herself and Tom Singleton two of the guards were bribed; but these successes proved delusive, the corrupted parties being removed the very night after they had sold themselves.

The game had to be begun anew, and with increased caution. It was evident that the vigilant eyes of Balfour were upon all

their movements, and the zeal and activity of Mrs. Brewton soon drew down upon her the especial attentions of the commandant. She was congratulating herself one morning upon the considerable progress which she had made in the favor of a British sergeant, in whom the officers placed considerable confidence, when she was surprised by a visit from Balfour. He was smiling and very courteous, and these, with him, were always suspicious appearances. He did not leave her long in doubt as to his purpose.

"My dear Mrs. Brewton," said he, "I am sorry to perceive that the atmosphere of Charleston does not quite agree with you this season. Everybody remarks how much flesh and color you have lost within a month. My anxiety in your behalf makes me resolute that you shall change the air. I have brought you a passport, accordingly, giving you permission to retire to the country, whither you will please depart within the next twenty-four hours. You had better go to the Congarees—anywhere not within eighty miles of the city."

The beautiful widow, for once, was overwhelmed.

"What do you fear?" she at length demanded, impetuously.

"Your health, your beauty, your spirits, all of which are in peril while you remain here."

She would have expostulated and argued, even promised and pleaded, for she was willing, at this moment, to submit to some sacrifices, to make some concessions of pride and spirit, but in vain! The petty tyrant was not to be moved, and, with a Parthian arrow, she prepared for her departure.

"I could have looked for nothing less from such as you. The want of gallantry and grace is always the sure sign of an equal want of character and courage. Colonel Balfour, I am encouraged by your fears, since these alone expel me from your garrison. Well, sir, the fortress which thus apprehends danger from a woman must surely first have become conscious of the worthlessness of its men."

"Ah! madam, you will then give me no credit for the sympathy and care which are thus mindful of your health. We shall greatly miss you from the garrison, but shall find consolæ-

tion in the fact that when you come back to us, you will have recovered all your bloom and beauty. Good morning! An escort shall attend you to the 'Four-mile House.'"

Her departure was a loss to our conspirators, and somewhat discouraged their hopes and efforts. Several of them, that night, were assembled in consultation at old Tom Singleton's when Proctor suddenly presented himself. Singleton received him alone, in an upper apartment, and did not now take him down to the vaulted chamber whither we accompanied him on a previous occasion. The old man received him hurriedly, and reviewed his case with some abruptness. Proctor had seen him repeatedly, we may here mention, in interviews which we have not been required to report. The two spoke, accordingly, with reference to foregone conclusions, which the reader must take for granted.

"Pryor," said Singleton, "has done all that he could for you. I have the affidavits which he has procured, and the witnesses are all forthcoming. But, from all that I can see and hear, Major Proctor, they will avail you nothing. It is evident to me that Balfour means to destroy you, and he is well seconded by that insidious scoundrel, Vaughan. What they alleged against you in the affair of Dorchester, might be met and refuted, were that alone the difficulty;—but your capture by Walton, the unhappy combination of circumstances which marked your detention, the evidence of Williamson and of your servant John, all together, persuade me that you can do nothing better than make your way from the garrison, and cover yourself among the mountains of North Carolina."

"What! sir, and not face the enemy—not stand this trial?"

"By no means."

"Impossible! my honor!—"

"Can not counsel you to surrender yourself, bound hand and foot, into the hands of your enemy."

Proctor shook his head mournfully, and being provided by Singleton with the papers for which he came, and finding the manner of the latter rather hurried and impatient, he prepared to take his departure; but, before he could do so, both parties were suddenly surprised by the appearance, even as the door

was unclosing for the egress of Proctor, of his supposed loyalist acquaintance, Furness.

Proctor was really rejoiced to see him, and old Singleton disquieted. A squeeze of the hand with the latter, and a word or two, as it were, to remind him that he was *young* Furness, son of *old* Furness, whom he ought to know so well, and the partisan turned away with Proctor, saying to Singleton that he would see him again within the hour. The old man replied, gruffly—

“Better see your friend out of the city, and take care, both of you, that no one sees your backs unless beyond cannon distance.”

With these words, he closed the door upon them, and returned to his guests in the cellar.

Furness, or rather Singleton, soon told his story to Proctor, as he had, within two hours, told it to Balfour. He professed to have been taken by Marion's men at the defeat of Lieutenant Meadows' escort, and had just succeeded in making his escape from captivity.

Such was the substance of his narrative. Of course, he revealed as little as possible to his companion, being more anxious to hear him speak than to say anything himself. The details given by Proctor, in answer to his inquiries, unfolded fully the condition of affairs in the city, his own approaching trial, with that of Colonel Walton, and the charges brought against both. Singleton soon gathered from the statement, in Proctor's own case, that he stood in an attitude of serious danger. He did not hesitate to give him the same counsel which had been given by old Tom Singleton. Proctor was unwilling to see the matter in so gloomy a light; but was evidently deeply oppressed by what he heard.

“In a few days,” said Singleton, “I hope to leave for the mountains myself, as soon as I shall have procured some new supplies from the commandant; and if you will only steal away before that time, and meet me on the road, we can find a safe retreat for you until you can be sure of a proper tribunal and honest judges. Think of this matter to-night, and do not deceive yourself. There is evidently a secret and strong purpose, on the part of Balfour, to destroy you; and, unfortunately,

circumstances have given him all the advantage in the game. I will see you soon to-morrow—nay, if you will give me a part of your bed, I will sleep with you to-night, for, as yet, I have sought no quarters.”

“Gladly,” was the reply; and Proctor gave him instructions where to find him. They separated, and Singleton immediately hurried back to his kinsman. He conferred with him for ten or fifteen minutes, heard all that had been done, and all that was doing, and then proceeded to see Katharine, whom he yet dreaded to encounter. She threw her arms about his neck as she recognised him, and exclaimed—

“O, Robert! you peril everything for me—for him! Tell me, can you save him again?”

“I have come to see and try, Katharine. God alone knows yet what we may achieve. As yet, I know but little of his condition and his dangers. Sit, dearest, and you shall tell me all.”

She did so—all that she knew, felt, and feared. Mrs. Singleton did the same. Our partisan shuddered as he beheld the prospect. It was no longer one in which a troop of desperate horsemen could achieve deliverance. But he did not suffer his gravity to appear conspicuous.

“Cheer up,” said he. “It is a sad affair; but I have struggled through worse. We must not despond, since that will make us feeble. I must hurry off at once, and see Uncle Tom again. I must learn some other particulars before I can hope to do anything. I will try to see you in the morning; but must move cautiously. You remember that I am still Captain Funness, of the loyalists.”

This, for the time, ended their conference; and the indefatigable partisan hurried off once more to see his ancient kinsman. We need not ask what subjects they discussed, as, for the time, the discussion was without result. Enough, that the more our partisan became aware of the true nature of the case in the affair of Walton, the more did its dangers loom out upon his imagination. When old Singleton apprized him of the terms offered by Balfour for the safety of Walton, he was stricken as with a bullet. These had been suppressed by Kate.

"Can it be true!" he exclaimed, when he recovered speech. "Then, if we fail to rescue him, Katharine will consent."

"Never!" cried the old man, fiercely.

"She *must!* She can not avoid it!" was the mournful reply of Robert Singleton. "I shall deplore the necessity more than all, perhaps, but it will be a necessity, nevertheless."

When told of the oath prescribed by Walton to his daughter, he exclaimed—

"Ah, the same magnanimous spirit and true heart! But, should the last necessity occur, even that oath will not, and ought not to bind her."

"Would you have her marry that scoundrel?"

"She must save her father, even at that sacrifice!"

"Never!"

"Hush, sir! Hush! This is all idle."

We need not pursue the unprofitable dialogue. It was late when the parties separated; but Singleton, or Furness now, found Proctor waiting him with anxiety. They sat up late together, these young men, making their mutual revelations, and "chewing the cud of sweet and bitter thought." Our partisan continued to persuade his companion to a secret and swift departure from the city; but with no success.

"No!" was the reply of Proctor. "Though I perish, I will never, by such a flight, give countenance to the slander that assails my honor."

Early next morning, both of them were abroad. Soon after breakfast, Furness found his way to the presence of Balfour. We have already mentioned his communication with the latter the day before. It will suffice to say that he gave the commandant a full and satisfactory account of all his adventures, as a loyalist, from the moment when he set out with the escort of Meadows. Balfour had no complaints of Furness in this business. On the contrary, basing his judgment upon the favorable, but singularly mistaken, report of Meadows, he was pleased to bestow a high compliment upon the fidelity and desperate courage which the former had displayed. In fact, the loyalist captain was in a fair way to become a favorite with Balfour. The profound deference of the provincial was particularly grate-

ful to the self-esteem of the puffed-up *parvenu*. He freely spoke to him of his own and public affairs, until, at length, the affair of Walton was brought upon the carpet. Having stated the full particulars of his case to a very attentive auditor, who found it exceedingly difficult to restrain the exhibitions of his emotion and keep them within the limits of simple curiosity, Balfour suddenly clapped Furness on the shoulder, exclaiming—

“By the way, captain, you are the very man to serve me in this business!”

“Anything that I can do, colonel?”

“You can do much. You shall visit Walton in the provost. You shall let him know how hopeless is the chance for rebellion in the back country. You shall report all the dangers of his case, and persuade him of the necessity of full submission. He doubts me—he distrusts me—and will doubt all the British officers; but one of his own people, who knows the interior, and can report truly how little he has to build on, will probably be listened to. The object is fully to alarm his fears and those of his daughter, and to reconcile him to such concessions as I shall require in return for his pardon. I am not successful in showing him these things. I provoke his anger, and become angry myself. Now, you shall see and show that I do not seek his life; but that I *will* use my power *and take it*, unless he consents to my demand! You will report to him also that to-morrow is appointed for his trial. Succeed in what I desire, Furness, and I am your friend for life. You are in the way of promotion.”

Singleton had great difficulty in suppressing the shows of eagerness and joy, when told that he was to see Walton in his dungeon.

“I will do it, colonel! I will do what you require. That is, if I can; but I am afraid that Colonel Walton will be as little likely to listen to me, a loyalist, as to the British officers. Besides, I am—”

“Pooh! pooh! You distrust yourself, Captain Furness. You are only too modest. You have better abilities, my young friend, than you yourself suspect; but I have pierced your depths, and see what can be made of you. You will do this business well, I feel very certain. Here, let me write the order

for your admission to Walton. You will go to him to-night, after his daughter shall have left him, or to-morrow night—that will be better, when he shall have undergone his trial, and been made aware of his sentence. To-morrow evening dooms him to the gallows—you will insist upon the only measure by which to save him from it. Do you understand?”

“Perfectly. I will see him to-night and prepare him for the danger, and to-morrow, when what I have predicted shall have been realized, he will, perhaps, be better able to appreciate his situation.”

“Meanwhile, I shall work upon the daughter. Do your part faithfully, and it is odds but we carry the game. But where are you lodging?”

“Nowhere, exactly. Last night, Major Proctor, whom I met at Dorchester, gave me a bed at his lodgings.”

“Ha! Beware of him! He is a traitor!”

“He! Major Proctor!”

“What! You have not heard? He is about to be tried, also, for offences which will drive him from the army or hang him. Beware of him; but continue to lodge with him, if he will suffer you. You can keep an eye on him. Eh? You understand?”

“I do! I see! It shall be done!”

“What are you doing with yourself to-day? Nothing? Then drive out at twelve o'clock to Hampstead—the ‘field of honor;’ anybody will tell you where to find it. There is to be a duel to-day between two hot bloods of the garrison, about a lady’s favors; Mad Archy Campbell, who captured Colonel Walton, a regular dare-devil, and Captain Harley, of the rifles, who is said to be a fire-cater. They fight with the small-sword. It will be a pretty passage, and you will be delighted. Your presence will be no objection. There will be several spectators.”

“But do you suffer such affairs?”

“I do not *see* them. I hear of them only when all’s over, and then arrive at nothing positive. I only see when I am not disposed to suffer them. In this case, there are reasons why I *should not* see. Do you go, and report to me the affair.”

“I shall be there, colonel. I shall be pleased to see.”

“Should the passage be a short one, drive round, after it, to Mrs. Rivington’s, whose ‘mornings’ take place at ‘one.’ You will see everybody there. I have *carte blanche*, and you will find yourself at home there, at that hour, any day in the week.”

Singleton gladly availed himself of Balfour’s suggestion to see the duel. He rode out with Proctor, who procured for him a horse; our hero having made his appearance in the city without one. His precaution had stabled his own steed, with the horses of those of his best troopers, and in their keeping, within six miles of town, in a close thicket, not far from the Goose Creek road.

A score of spectators were already upon the ground. The spot chosen in that day for such purposes was but a little way beyond the lines of the garrison, amid a clump of mingling pines and oaks that covered a small headland on the banks of the Cooper. Hither soon came the two combatants, attended by several friends, a couple of assistants, and as many surgeons. Dueling was then as now, in the same region, a recognised social institution. But it was then an affair of *honor*, and not, as too frequently now, an affair of malice. The solicitude was the *point of honor* simply—to maintain the social attitude. Malice, rage, vindictiveness, would have been held qualities entirely inconsistent with the grace and chivalry of a passage at arms between gentlemen; and to waive all advantages, in favor of an opponent, was always a struggle, gracefully, but tenaciously urged between the parties, even after weapons had been crossed.

Singleton observed the scene with much interest. He prided himself upon his own swordmanship, and anticipated, with some eagerness, the event. The parties were both fine-looking men. Archy Campbell was in the best of spirits, smiling and satisfied, habited in a sort of military undress, in the most gentlemanly fashion of the time. Stock, his second, was sulky and satirical. Harley, his opponent, was cool, courteous, and rigid as a martinet. The time was come, and, under the direction of Stock, Campbell threw off his coat, vest, *chapeau bras*, and cravat. The spectators became as eager for the issue as ever were the gamblers of the cockpit, largely betting on a favorite man. But they were all destined to disappointment. The “point of

honor" in that day did not deny such a conclusion to the affair as that which followed. When all was expectation, the friend of Harley stepped forward and demanded of Stock, loudly enough for everybody to hear—

"Is it true, Major Stock, that your principal is married?"

"The devil! Yes! But what a question! True, to be sure it is"—then, *sotto voce*—"and the worse for me! But"—aloud—"what has this marriage to do with the business?"

"A great deal, sir," replied the other, "as we will show you hereafter. One other question: Is it true that your principal is married to Miss Paulina Phelps?"

"Certainly, sir. It is to Miss Paulina Phelps that Major Archibald Campbell is married."

"Then, sir, we withdraw our invitation to the field. It is not our policy or principle to fight with a gentleman on behalf of his own wife; and, indeed, we conceive that, in marrying the offender, she has preferred a mode, and perhaps the best, of punishing him for his offences to herself. We repeat that our challenge is withdrawn upon the original grounds; but without the assertion of any claim on our part that the duel should not go on. It is with the defendant to say whether he will suffer us to quit the field."

This was said with a profound gravity, and with the stateliness of a *diplomat*. A hearty laugh followed from Campbell.

"To be sure," said he, "I consent; but on one condition, that Captain Harley and his companions dine with me and my wife to-day. Expecting to be hurt in the encounter with so keen a swordsman, I ordered a good dinner, in order that my friends should not behold my sufferings without some consolation."

The parties embraced; and thus ended an affair of honor of the eighteenth century. Stock seemed the only person not satisfied with the arrangement. He said, with an affectation of disappointment—

"It's too provoking! I was in hopes that Harley would have given you your quietus, and then I should have saved my guineas."

"Not so," cried Campbell. "I prepared against that, and

left proofs of the debt in the hands of my wife, who is the very woman to prosecute the claim, if only that she might have in her power so rare a gallant."

"I am reconciled to your escape and safety," retorted Stock. "I have too sensible a fear of the tender mercies of a creditor among the sex."

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE PLOT.

THE rest of the day was employed by Singleton, the partisan, with the assistance of tried friends in the city, in procuring certain implements for the use of Colonel Walton in prison. The permit which enabled him, as Furness, the loyalist, to have free access to the prisoner, offered him an opportunity quite too important to be foregone. He accumulated files, acids, and a rope-ladder, and took them to him that very night, after Katharine had left the prison. We may take for granted that he urged none of the arguments to Walton which Balfour had put into his mouth.

The next day Walton's trial came on—if that may be called a trial which examined no witnesses. Conviction and sentence were things of course; and the prisoner was remanded to his dungeon with the assurance that he would, in four days, expiate his offences to the crown upon the gallows. He heard his doom with a calm and fearless spirit, indignantly protested against the mockery of justice which he had just gone through, and appealed to the arms of his country for the punishment of those who should shed his blood under such a sentence. Scarcely was the examination over, when Balfour again waited upon Katharine. He was the first to report the decision of the court.

“Your father's life is in your own hands, Miss Walton.”

“Mercy! mercy!” she shrieked, falling before him.

“Boon for boon, prayer for prayer, mercy for mercy—love for life!”

She held up her hands, pleading dumbly.

“As we both live, Katharine Walton, these are the only conditions!” he answered, sternly.

She sank forward gasping, and lay without sign of life upon her face. He raised her up in alarm, and called for Mrs. Singleton. She hurried in and relieved him of his burden.

“Why do you linger, sir?” she asked. “You have done your work effectually, for the present, at least. Leave us now, sir, if you please. It will take some time before I can recover her.”

An oath rose to Balfour’s lips, which he found it somewhat difficult to suppress. He seized his *chapeau bras* and hastily disappeared, without saying a word. Hurrying to the provost, he left instructions there that Miss Walton should *not* that day be admitted to see her father. This was on the plea of tenderness for her feelings, and sympathy with her situation. But, in truth, the policy was dictated by a desire to work upon her anxiety and fears—to make her feel, in every possible way, how arbitrary and entire was his power. Meanwhile, the native citizens of the place were moving. A memorial, in behalf of Colonel Walton, was prepared and signed by all the chief people among the whig inhabitants. Several of the loyalists signed it also, and the signatures of the ladies were numerous. A committee of these presented it, and the petition was enforced by the personal entreaties and tears of those presenting it. It was without effect. The answer of Balfour was a cold one. It is to the credit of General Williamson that he earnestly added his efforts to those of the citizens.

“What!” said Balfour. “You, too, general! Do you so soon forget your own recent escape from the clutches of this insolent rebel?”

“No, sir: and it is this recollection that now prompts my entreaty. I cannot forget that, but for the interposition of Colonel Walton, which saved me from the tender mercies of his subordinates, I should certainly have tasted of the terrible doom which now threatens him.”

“And which he *must* suffer!” was the conclusive reply. “The public safety requires this sacrifice. We must rebuke rebellion by the punishment of some of its conspicuous leaders.”

That day Balfour took his dinner alone at his quarters, dining at a late hour, and after many fatigues and excitements which,

to a mind like his, were not unmixed with pleasure. He was rioting in power. He was not without a hope of realizing his most selfish objects. At length, he had persuaded the people of Charleston, and Katharine Walton in particular, of the earnest purpose which he entertained. She, at length, felt that her father's life was really in danger. She had already begun to seek and to sue, in tears and gloomy apprehension. She had paid him a visit, in order to obtain permission to see her father again; a privilege which, as we have seen, he had that day denied. He had avoided her, and he conjectured the extent of her agony. Gloating over his convictions, he drank freely of his Madeira, and was already at the close of his feast, when Alfred Monckton made his appearance from the adjoining room where he wrote, and communicated the arrival of Major Vaughan from Dorchester. He had been summoned down to attend the trial of Proctor, which was assigned for the ensuing day.

"Send him here," said Balfour, and Vaughan was instantly ushered into the presence of the potentate.

"You are welcome, Vaughan, doubly welcome at this moment. Sit, and fill yourself a glass. We are at the harvest time at last."

"Yes, colonel, and a full harvest shall we have of it. I bring you news which shall strengthen the evidence against this arch-traitor."

"Ah, indeed! The more the merrier, though we scarcely need it. We have quite enough in this late affair, for his full conviction. But what's your news?"

"Such as will startle you. You remember the fellow that palmed himself off upon you as Captain Furness of the loyalist rifles?"

"Yes. Well, was he not what he called himself?"

"No, indeed! He was no other than the rebel, Colonel Singleton, of Marion's brigade!"

"What!" cried Balfour starting to his feet. "How know you this?"

"By the true Captain Furness himself, who has just escaped from the guard assigned for his safe-keeping among the rebels. He made his way to the post at Dorchester, and has come with

me to town. I have brought him here, and only wait the word from you to introduce him."

"Bring him in! By the Lord Harry, but this is excellent! And Proctor knew him at Dorchester?"

"Intimately!"

"And they are intimate together here, at this moment, and occupy the same lodgings."

"Indeed! then we have them! *Here*, do you say?"

"Here! here! and the rebel has imposed upon me thrice. Shall he not swing? But bring in the genuine Furness. Are you sure of him?"

"Quite sure! His proofs are beyond question, and he brings a great deal of intelligence."

"Bring him in, bring him in! Singleton! Ha! ha! *Her* lover, *her* betrothed! The audacious rebel! Well! the vengeance shall be sweet in degree with the insolence! Nothing shall save *him*! She shall pray for *him* in vain. She can purchase but the life of one, and her choice must be her father. Ha! well. He is here."

Vaughan returned, bringing in the true Furness. He was a man very much in size and person like the bold rebel who had assumed his character, but wanting the noble bearing, the high tone, the eagle eye and aspect. He was seated, and the wine poured out, and the impatient Balfour summoned him to a narrative of all the particulars relating to his capture, detention, and escape. The commandant was very soon convinced that he had been egregiously deceived hitherto; and his mortified vanity, at the deception, made him doubly vindictive in his determination. He recalled all the dialogues between himself and Singleton, in the assumed character of the latter; how freely he had unfolded himself to the supposed loyalist; and bitterly reflected how much material for secret scorn and laughter his confidence must have afforded to the partisan. His cheeks flushed with the reflection of a deeper red than could be given by the ruddy juices which he drank, and, striking his fist heavily down upon the table, he exclaimed, in a voice of thunder—

"Shall he not swing for it!—swing on a gallows as high as that of Haman!"

“And you say that he is here—here now, within the city?” demanded Vaughan.

“Ay, indeed! and a lodger with that other traitor of our own, John Proctor!”

“Then we have them both!”

“Ay, indeed! in the same net! They shall pay for their audacity.”

“Should you not seize them at once, colonel?”

“Ay, indeed!”—rising—“I will see to it. Here, Mr. Monckton.”

The secretary appeared at the entrance

“But, no!” said Balfour, resuming his seat, and filling his glass anew. “You may go,” said he to Monckton. “Pass the bottle, Major Vaughan, to Captain Furness. I have a better plan for making this arrest. We are probably watched. Any movement, at this moment, were I to send a guard to Proctor’s lodgings, and Singleton not happen to be there, might only give him warning, and enable him to make his escape.”

“How can that be? Issue orders, in advance, that no one leave the city, and strengthen the guards along the lines.”

“Ah! Vaughan, that would only make the matter worse. The city is full of traitors. They have their emissaries everywhere, and communicate with the enemy by means of the winds, I believe, for there’s no finding out the process exactly. But it is fortunate that my very confidence in this rebel Singleton gives me the means for securing him, if we make no stir, and do not alarm his apprehensions. He is to visit Walton to-night, at eight o’clock, in the provost. *There*, we have him. He will scarcely fail to be there; *was* there last night, and made me quite a glowing report, this morning, of what he had done toward convincing Walton of the necessity of making submission, and doing what is required of him.”

“What is that, sir?”

“Oh, sir, a matter of state, which”—looking askant at the loyalist—“need not be dwelt upon. It is enough that the rebel will seek Walton again to-night in his dungeon. I am now satisfied that he will do so with the view of facilitating his escape. Against that we will guard. But we will take him in

the toils. We have this fellow of Proctor's, John, constantly on the heels of his master. I will have *him* here, and command his watch upon both, and, to-night you shall be ready, with a guard, to arrest him in Walton's dungeon. How do you relish the service?"

"Command me, sir," eagerly.

"And you, Captain Furness, will have no sort of objection to change places with your late captor—to assist in putting him into limbo?"

"Not a bit, colonel!"

"Very good! Let us make our arrangements."

The plan was devised. The details, which were fully adequate to the object, need not concern us. Enough that Balfour, Vaughan, and the loyalist, were all warmed with a tiger appetite for the blood of the victim, which could scarcely be restrained by the policy which determined not to move until it could move with certainty. We may add that Proctor's treacherous servant, John, was soon put in requisition, and counselled to report equally all the movements of Singleton as well as those of his late master. When, at the close of the conference between the parties, Alfred Monckton was again called for, he had disappeared.

"Gone to dinner, sir," was the answer of the other secretary, who had just returned from his.

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE COUNTER PLOT.

BALFOUR, filled with excitement and wine, had spoken in louder accents than were necessary, and Monckton heard every syllable. He was at once struck with the importance of the new danger, not only to Proctor—with whose fate he deeply sympathized on account of his sister—but to Singleton, in whose behalf he felt a rising interest, in consequence of his intimacy with Katharine Walton, which had duly ripened with that of Ella Monckton. We have seen how large was the influence which his sister possessed over him, and how small was that of Balfour. The latter he regarded with positive antipathy, the consequence of the tyrannous and wanton insolence of the commandant, which he seldom forbore to exercise. Should he suffer these two noble young men to become his victims? Should he refuse to the sister whom he loved that intelligence, the timely use of which might save them—a result so precious to her desires and best affections? He had not strength for this. His conscience reproached him with the betrayal of his employer's secrets; but his will was not sufficiently potent to suffer him to keep them when the safety of such dear interests counselled their revelation. The struggle in his mind was a very brief one. With eager agitation, he revealed the whole affair to Ella, with all the resolutions which had been adopted by the commandant, and the particular means to be employed for the capture of Singleton. She was overwhelmed at the danger which threatened the man she loved and the lover of her friend.

“Alfred,” said she, “you must go to Kate this very moment and tell her every syllable.”

“Impossible! I must hurry back this very moment, or as soon as I have swallowed my dinner. I am wanted; and if not absolutely called for before I return, it will be only because Balfour has started another bottle.”

“Then I must do it myself!”

And, with that calm, but unyielding energy which was characteristic of her affections, the noble girl at once hurried off to the dwelling of Mrs. Singleton, while her brother, trembling with a secret consciousness of wrong, hastened back to the weary toils of his secretaryship.

Kate Walton was absent; and, in an agony of apprehension, Ella related her discovery to Mrs. Singleton. The old lady was seriously alarmed.

“They must be found!” said she; “Robert must be advised of this new danger in season to prevent it. Yet where to find him at this moment! There is but one hope. Write, my child—write all that is necessary to be said—to Tom Singleton. Fortunately, little George Spidell is here preparing for his trip to-night. He will find him, and carry the letter safely. This is our only chance.”

Ella sat down to the table and penned the hasty billet, giving all the substantial details in respect to the impending danger. George was called up and despatched upon his errand; while Ella hastened home, in order to provoke as little suspicion at this moment as possible.

Let us now proceed to the lodgings of Proctor. Here, Singleton and himself were just sitting down to a late dinner. The former had only a moment before made his appearance. Both of them were gloomy enough, and but little inclined to eat. Their disinclination was increased by the sudden appearance of old Tom Singleton. The apology was brief which took our partisan away from the table to a corner of the room. Here, the billet of Ella Monckton was thrust into his hands. The moment he had possessed himself of its contents, he turned to Proctor.

“What would you do?” demanded Tom Singleton.

“What I should! Proctor, I have deceived you. Read that!”

He displayed the billet to the eyes of the astonished Briton, who had scarcely glanced at the paper before he exclaimed—

"Who does this come from? Whose handwriting is it?"

"What matters that?" demanded Tom Singleton. "Enough that it comes from a true friend. It is all the truth."

"Pardon me," said Proctor, "that, seeing the handwriting, I did not consider the contents. You will see that it is from the same pen that wrote me the anonymous warning of danger."

"Then I congratulate you, Major Proctor, on having found interest in the heart of one of the noblest young creatures in the city," answered Tom Singleton.

"Who?" demanded Proctor, eagerly.

"Miss Monckton—Ella Monckton; as sweet a girl as I ever knew. But of this hereafter. What is to be done?"

"Proctor," said Robert Singleton, "I am in your power. I throw myself on your generosity. You see how I have deceived you!"

"And can you doubt me, Singleton?" The young Englishman extended his arms, and the two were at once locked in a fast embrace. Old Tom Singleton looked on silently for a moment. At length he spoke—

"All very well, and very grateful, young gentlemen; but you are neither of you out of the halter yet. The question is, what is to be done? Now, if you will listen to me—"

"Speak, sir."

"Well, briefly, then, the house is watched at present. Your fellow, John, is on the lookout somewhere. He has seen me come in. He must see me go out. And the next question is how to get Bob Singleton out without his being seen by the same rascally eyes. Now my notion is, Major Proctor, that, if we two go forth together, we shall certainly draw this spy after us. We may go forth to a certain distance and then separate. When we have thus drawn off the spy, our kinsman here can take his departure and shape for himself another course. To do anything for *his* safety, we must first cut the clews of the spy. I will give Robert directions whither to go; and, when I separate from you, I will seek for him. The rest hereafter. Are you prepared to lose your dinner?"

Proctor caught up his hat on the instant, and old Singleton, after a few words to our partisan, went out with the former.

Having allowed a reasonable time after their departure, Robert Singleton went forth also; and, obeying the instructions of his kinsman, took his route in a northeastern direction, gradually inclining to the Governor's Bridge.

The streets were generally quiet. He met but few persons, and but one or two of the military. The day was quite warm, and it was just that time of the day when, dinner being over mostly in every quarter, the great body of the people were in the full enjoyment of the customary *siesta*. Singleton provoked little notice, and congratulated himself with the belief that he had been seen by no one likely to give him trouble. Thus advancing, he at length reached the eastern margin of the city, and but a short distance below the lines which divided it in that quarter from "The Neck." The tide was low. An old hulk lay stranded beside the wharf, which, at this point, was a rude fabric of palmetto logs, clumsily thrown together and very much in decay. On one side the logs were partially rotted out, leaving a space sufficiently large for the entrance of an able-bodied man. Singleton loitered awhile about the old hulk, then, as his eyes took in the neighboring places, and he fancied himself unseen, he quietly passed over the sides of the hulk and stole into the openings of the wharf. Here he was in a sort of cavern. The space between the logs had never been filled in, and, while the tide was low, his territory was ample for all reasonable exercise. At ordinary tides, he could still have kept his head out of water, yet kept within his cavern. Looking about him, he discovered within the recess, also, the well-kept boat of Master Lockwood and his efficient second officer, Master George Spidell. Another chasm in the wharf, on the northern side, afforded the little craft the means of egress; and quietly throwing himself down in the bottom of the vessel, Singleton yielded himself up to meditations, the nature of which, as we may readily suppose, were anything but agreeable.

Meanwhile, old Tom Singleton and Proctor pursued their way together in a westwardly direction, finally passing into Broad street.

"I am greatly concerned about your kinsman's safety," said Proctor. "What plan will you adopt for it?"

“Better that you should *not* know,” said the old man; “the more ignorant you are, on this subject, the less embarrassment to you if called upon to answer. Do not be displeased. If you could really assist in his escape, I should tell you freely what I purpose.”

“And if you need the help of a weapon, sir, I beg you will think of mine.”

“No! no! Proctor, we must keep your enemies in the wrong. It will be of no service on your trial, even if you could prove it so; but it is something also to suffer with a pure heart, and a fearless conscience. Had you taken the counsels of this dear girl in season!”

“What do you know of Miss Monckton?” demanded Proctor abruptly.

“Know her! I know everything of her—knew her from an infant—know her mother, and very intimately knew her father.”

“She is of good family?”

“One of the best in the country.”

“She is not beautiful?”

“No! but very sweet, and very true, sir—and there’s a world of beauty in her heart. You do not ask if she is rich!”

“I did not think of it.”

“Humph! a very singular omission. And now, sir, as I take for granted that your scoundrelly servant has his eyes upon us, and that Robert Singleton has made off in the opposite direction, it may be just as well that we should separate. We are now within a hundred yards of the widow Monckton’s dwelling. An old house, sir—lacks paint, you see. The widow is rather needy.”

The old man wheeled off without any adieus. Involuntarily, Proctor turned about in the same direction. But a moment’s reflection taught him that, with the eyes of the spy in all probability upon him, his better course was to continue onward. As he did so, his eyes caught again the venerable outlines of the widow Monckton’s mansion. Instantly a new impulse fastened upon his mind. He did not soliloquize, but the thoughts, fashioned somewhat in this manner, passed through his brain.

“It may be that I am at the end of my career, and, at this moment, the only two persons who have manifested any interest in my fortunes, and who have striven to avert my fate, are those whom I have never sought. Here is a noble rebel against whom I have fought. He has taught me to understand the full beauty of that friendship of which we read in the history of David and Jonathan. I could freely die in battle for that man!—And here is one—a woman—young, devoted!—I will see her! I will speak to her the thoughts—the gratitude that fills my heart! She, perhaps, of all this city, would feel a pang at my death. Her hands, alone, might plant some sad flower upon my grave!”

He looked round in search of Tom Singleton. The retreating form of the old man was nearly out of sight. Proctor went forward. A few moments brought him to the door of the widow's dwelling. He raised the antiquated knocker, and was scarcely conscious of the heavy reverberations which followed from the stroke. He asked to see Miss Monckton, and was instantly admitted.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE DOVE'S CONQUEST, AND THE ADDER'S RAGE.

SHOWN into the parlor of the ancient mansion of Mrs. Monckton, and left alone by the servant, Proctor, for the first time, began to reflect coolly upon the motive of his visit. He had simply obeyed an impulse. But that impulse, when he appealed to his deliberate thought, he soon discovered to spring from a just recognition of his duty. In his mind, he ran over very rapidly the whole history of that grateful interest which (he now knew) Miss Monckton had taken in his fortunes. The discovery which had just been made furnished the clew to a long train of services which he owed to that lady, and revealed her to him as a being of generous and noble nature, whose devotion to his safety and honor, so long and delicately concealed, was significant of warmer feelings than those of mere generosity. He recalled hurriedly what he knew of her personally—what he had heard her say—her looks, tone, and general manner; and his interest in her person and character sensibly increased in consequence of this review. When, again, he remembered his own isolation, the absence of all relationships on which he could rely in his emergency, the indifference and selfishness of his kinsman, and the hostility of his superiors, his heart warmed more than ever to the young and gentle creature whose preferences, so secret and so useful to him, had been so generous and decided. When, at length, Ella Monckton entered the apartment, he was prepared, though unconsciously, to do justice not only to her devotion, but to her affections. A warm suffusion covered her face and neck as she appeared before him; but her eye was tremulously bright, and her heart was glowing with

emotions which might have had their birth in hope. As she appeared, he advanced impetuously, and, under another warm impulse of gratitude, he extended her his hand. Silently, she yielded her own to his grasp, which was accompanied with a warm pressure; and he scarcely suffered himself to conduct her to a seat, before he declared his knowledge of all that she had wrought in his behalf.

“Miss Monckton, I can not do justice to my gratitude by words. I have only lately become aware of what you have done for me. You have found me alone, cheerless, hopeless, struggling against many and powerful enemies. You have, like an unseen angel, whispered to me in counsels and warnings which I have not sufficiently heeded. It is now, perhaps, too late for safety—not too late for acknowledgment and gratitude. Would that I could requite such kindness, such generosity! But you have my prayers, my thanks, my best thoughts and fondest remembrances.”

He carried her hand to his lips. A deep sigh escaped her. It was her only answer. He continued:—

“Had I but known in season! Had I but suspected the source of these secret intimations of my guardian angel, which would have taught me of my secret dangers! Had I but given them the heed which they deserved! Regret is hopeless now; my enemies are about to triumph; I am in the toils; they will conquer; I see no process of escape. But, if I perish, Miss Monckton, believe me, the thought of your interest in my fate, the feeling of a most devoted gratitude within my soul, will be the last consciousness which will leave my spirit.”

She murmured, rather than spoke—

“Oh! do not speak thus—do not speak of perishing. Surely, surely, Major Proctor, you have means of escape!”

“No!” he answered gloomily—“my trial takes place to-morrow. My enemies are prepared to destroy me. Circumstances of the most cruel sort combine against me, and afford proof which will be conclusive to any court of what will be declared my guilt and treason. They will find me guilty, and shame will fasten upon my name, even if the tyranny under which I suffer shall forbear my life.”

“But you may escape. You are still free. You will fly from the city and avoid this trial!”

“That will be as fatal to my fame as if I were to linger here and perish. That is what my enemies desire. It is for this reason that, charged as I am with the most criminal offences, Balfour leaves me out of bonds. He pretends to ascribe this forbearance to a due regard to my uncle, and to the hope that I will free myself from these imputations. But he knows his power to convict me, and only affords me these opportunities of flight that I may convict myself. I dare not avail myself of this opportunity. I must face my enemies—and must perish!”

Ella Monckton covered her face with her hands. A slight sob escaped her, and Proctor beheld the glistening tears stealing through her fingers. He was seated beside her on the sofa. Unconsciously, his arm encircled her waist.

“You weep for me, Miss Monckton! Ah, these are precious tears! So strange to me, and doubly precious for this reason. I could die for such! I could almost dare to live for them!”

“Oh, live! live!” she exclaimed impetuously. “Let me implore you to fly from this danger, and from these merciless enemies. If they convict you, as you say they will—nay, as I know they will—it is shame, and perhaps death also. It can not be worse if you fly; and time will then be allowed you to refute these charges—to fasten the shame upon these hateful and treacherous people.”

In thus speaking, she had removed her hands from her face, and her eyes had resolutely sought his own. The big drops yet stood upon her cheeks, and the soft suffusion yet hung upon and fell from her lids. But the animation of glance which seconded her appeal made her very beautiful in the eyes of Proctor. How had he failed before to discover so much loveliness? His heart was deeply touched by her warm sympathies.

“Alas!” he exclaimed, “I can not hear you. I must not listen to such counsel. No, my dear Miss Monckton, I have been trained in a school which teaches that such a flight would be unmitigated dishonor. I must brave and face the danger, even though I foresee that it will overwhelm me. Whither should

I fly? To the rebels! Safety I might find among them—no doubt would; but a safety found in shame would make life intolerable. I must not contemplate such a prospect. Where else could I fly? To no region covered by our arms could I retire, without the double danger of disgrace and death. The fates surround me with a wall of fire I can not break through. I must encounter all that they threaten.”

She answered him with new entreaties and arguments, but he mournfully checked her pleadings.

“It is all in vain. To this fate I must yield. I can pursue no such course, not even though life were certainly safe, and shame were equally certain not to follow. Had I listened sooner to the sweet but unknown voice that counselled me at a season when I was deaf and blind to the danger which hunted at my heels! Ah! had I known you then, Miss Monckton, as I know you now! Hear me!” he exclaimed, passionately—“hear me, Miss Monckton, if it be not worse than madness to listen to such a declaration from one who, like myself, stands upon the brink of the precipice, with the terrible fate towering above and preparing to hurl him down the steeps! Hear me at the last moment, when life is without hope and love dreams of no fruition; hear me in the wild declaration that I would gladly live, if it were only to offer you a heart which now enshrines your image as its most precious treasure!”

Her head rested upon his shoulder. A deep-drawn convulsive sigh and sob spoke more than any words, the passionate delight with which her heart received a declaration which was not the less grateful because it came with the assurance that it was made hopelessly and in vain. He continued—

“I feel that I do not deceive myself, Miss Monckton. I feel that I do not make you an idle assurance. You have not shown this long-continued and devoted interest in my fortunes without being conscious of nobler and warmer sympathies than belong simply to humanity and friendship. In giving you my heart, Miss Monckton, do I deceive myself—have I not yours also? Ah!”

She threw herself with a wild cry upon his breast, and he held her there, closely pressed with emotions such as seemed to

kindle a new being in his breast. They were thenceforth united.

"It is not vain!—it is not vain, this precious consciousness, even though I die to-morrow!"

"You must not die!" she said, in quick but whispered accents. "You must *live* now—you *will* live"—the rest of the sentence was spoken in a whisper—"if not for yourself, for *me*!"

She buried her blushing face in his bosom. A new necessity became apparent to him. Whatever he should finally determine, she at least must be spared every unnecessary pang. She must be encouraged for the present with a hope, even if he indulged in none himself. And he promised—he knew not exactly what—to fly, to live—to preserve a life which had acquired a new value to both in that passionate, but fleeting interview of bliss. He promised her to elude the mockery of a trial which he well knew was but designed as furnishing the sanction to a brutal and selfish crime; though without really entertaining such a purpose. But her tears, and his own tenderness of mood, made him readily yield to an entreaty which he could find no other way to answer.

Why linger upon the scene? Enough that Proctor tore himself away from the maiden whom he had made happy and wretched in the same moment—happy in the sweet response to a sympathy which can live on nothing else; and wretched with fears that threatened to dash the cup of joy from her lips in the very moment when its delicious waters had been only tasted. Proctor had been gone but fifteen minutes. Ella Monckton was on her knees, before the sofa on which he had left her, when she was startled by a loud and sudden rapping at the door. It was opened by the servant, and the visiter, without a word, pushed into the passage, and darted at once into the parlor, the way to which he seems to have well known. Ella looked up to behold in the intruder the person of Major Vaughan, the enemy of Proctor, if not her own!

"How now, sir!" she exclaimed, starting to her feet, her face all flushed with indignation. "You here! By what right, sir do you presume thus to intrude upon me?"

His eyes searched the room. He did not instantly answer,

and her question was repeated with increasing indignation. It was evident that he was disappointed—that he did not expect to find her alone; but he put on an air of confidence, and the sneer that mantled his lips was of the most provoking insolence.

“He has gone! he has escaped; but only for the present. Did you suppose, Ella Monckton, that it was on a mission of love that I sought your dwelling?”

“If it were, no one should better know than yourself that such a mission was in vain.”

“Ah! is it so? But I will spoil the love of others! It was *hate* that brought me to your presence. It was for the purpose of a long-delayed vengeance that I came! If I can not find the way to *your* heart, no other shall!”

“In that I defy you, sir! You are too late!” This was said with all the exultation of a heart for the first time secure in a requited affection.

“I know it *now*! But your triumph shall be a short-lived one. Look! I hold in my hands the authority for the arrest of your minion. He shall be in bonds before the night is over. To-morrow brings his trial as a traitor, and in twenty-four hours he dies an ignominious death. Ha! do you *feel*—do you *fear* me now?”

“I loathe—I scorn you! Hence, sir, and leave me. You have no right here—none to insult me with your language or your presence. You may triumph in your hate, but you shall have no triumph over *me*. Were I myself decreed to perish, instead of *him*, my last words should be those of loathing and of scorn for you.”

With a grin of bitter malice, he shook the warrant at her, as he cried—

“Know, at least, that your faithlessness to me, and your silly passion for him, have doomed him. You could lure me to your feet *once*. Could you now prostrate yourself to mine, it would be unavailing for his safety. The gallows shall clip the neck that your fair hands have striven to environ!”

“Liar and craven! I deny that I ever offered a lure to your affections. Your vanity alone, confounded the courtesies of a

lady with another feeling. Begone! Were you not utterly base, you would seek your enemy with your sword, and not with the wretched artifices with which you have striven to destroy him."

"And were he not already *convict*, I should seek him now with the sword. But that were a poor revenge for me! No! Ella Monckton, I shall not now balk the sweets of a perfect vengeance by giving him an honorable death."

"Away! and meet him if you dare! You but cloak your cowardice under this miserable plea of vengeance!"

With a lurid grin that lighted up his features with a Satanic expression, he once more shook the order for arrest before her, and, striking it with his hands, exclaimed—

"When *this* has done its work, Ella Monckton, you may look for another visit from the man whose affections you have outraged. Till then, I leave you to your very pleasant meditations."

Once more, the maiden was left alone. Let us drop the veil for the present over her sorrows.

CHAPTER XLIX.

FINAL ISSUES.

THE secret of Vaughan's sudden appearance at Mrs Monckton's is easily made known. The treacherous servant of Proctor had tracked the latter to the spot. Vaughan had instructed him to communicate *to himself*, in particular, whatever movements Proctor might make ; and the spy, having seen him safely housed, had hurried off to his employer with his information. Vaughan, in his long interview with Balfour, had drunk freely. Though ordinarily a temperate man, cold and circumspect, he had been taken off his feet by the peculiar influences working upon his feelings. He was about to enjoy a long-delayed and vindictive passion. The prey was almost in his grasp, and the doom was about to be spoken. This conviction greatly excited him, yet this was not the sole cause of excitement. He was still unsatisfied. He would obtain revenge—he would atone to wounded pride ; but there was a lurking sense of shame and baseness which left his pride in need of far other sorts of soothing. Besides, Ella Monckton, the object, at one time, of far more grateful emotions, was as far removed from his attainment as ever. There was one thing which promised consolation. It was in the belief that, as yet, the feelings with which Ella regarded his enemy, were totally unknown to the latter, and locked up from all knowledge except his own, in the single bosom of the maiden herself. But even this assurance was about to be taken from him. He had just left Balfour, and returned to his own lodgings, inflamed with wine and gnawing passions, when the traitor, John, made his appearance hurriedly, and in

formed him of Proctor's appearance at the residence of Mrs. Monckton.

Thoroughly roused by the information, in his excitement he lost his coolness and circumspection; and, congratulating himself on the precaution which had provided him with Balfour's warrant for the arrest of Proctor, he hurried in search of him, with the hope to take him in the very presence of his mistress. His evil passions rendered him insensible to the brutality of such a proceeding. We have seen the results in his temporary disappointment. The event of the interview did not greatly improve his temper or his prudence. When he emerged from the dwelling of Mrs. Monckton, he found the spy in waiting with a couple of Hessians, who had been brought for the purpose of taking the prisoner into safekeeping. Vaughan was not willing to forego their services.

"You must recover trail, John," he said to the spy.

"Must have time for it, major. We must get back to his lodgings and see if he's gone back there; I left a pair of eyes on the lookout in that quarter, and can soon know. But it won't do to be going in a crowd. These men can follow us at a distance without appearing to follow, and you had better keep a good bowshot behind me. These rebels have their spies out as well as ourselves, and they whisper, from wall to wall, who's coming."

"As you will," said Vaughan—"only hasten! We must have him by the neck and heels before night!"

The party distributed by the spy pursued their way, but with considerable intervals between the several divisions. They reached, at length, the neighborhood of Proctor's lodgings. There they ascertained from the subordinate who had been left to watch the premises that he had reappeared, entered, and again gone forth, not ten minutes before. The direction which he had taken was pointed out, and the pursuers again resumed the chase.

For a long time they found it fruitless. Proctor, it seems, had set out to seek for Singleton, alias Furness. His mind had taken a new direction since his recent interview with Ella Monckton. Strange to say, the feeling of despair, and complete resig-

nation to his fate, which had weighed him to the earth not an hour before, had given way entirely to a new sentiment of hope and life. He scarcely yet grasped fully the vague intimation of his thought; but, for the first time, he felt how much wisdom there was in the counsel of his friend, which warned him to fly from a trial in which he was already unjustly condemned. Proctor had not yet fairly determined to adopt this advice, but the earnest desire to see and talk with Singleton once more vaguely contemplated this very necessity, and the means for employing it. Besides, we must do him the justice to say that a very considerable feeling of anxiety for the safety of the latter entered into the desire which he felt in respect to his own affairs.

But how to seek the fugitive was the question! Old Tom Singleton had, very properly, given him no clew; being very conscious that if, as he knew, Proctor was under espionage, it would only conduct the pursuers on Robert Singleton's track to suffer the former to find him out. We have seen where the latter had found shelter. It was sunset, and the dusk was rapidly approaching, when Tom Singleton left Conover's Hotel, in Queen street, and pushed up East Bay. He was suddenly encountered near Colonel Cruden's (Pinckney) residence by Proctor, the last man he desired to see. The latter would have stopped him, but he pushed by him, saying abruptly, as he passed—

“Major Proctor, if you would not do mischief, walk over to Ashley river, and forget that you have seen me.”

“But I would see my friend Singleton—I have something to say to him of very great importance.”

“Say it to your looking-glass! Dig a hole in your garden, as the barber of Midas did, and bury your secret from the winds. I tell you, sir, that you will mar everything—that you will only bring the enemy upon our footsteps.”

Proctor paused, half piqued at the rudeness of the old man, and half impressed by the reason of his suggestion. He stood aside, accordingly, and suffered him to make his way as he pleased. Old Singleton pushed forward, and, for a moment, Proctor watched him. The old man looked back, and seeing

that he was watched, darted aside into Pinckney street, pursuing a due-west direction. Proctor continued up the Bay, walking slowly, and fast forgetting the external world in his inward meditations. On a sudden, however, he was startled by the reappearance of Tom Singleton, who crossed the Bay from one of the streets at right angles with it, and hurried rapidly down to the wharves. Proctor's desire to see and speak with Robert Singleton was immediately revived within him. He looked back upon his own footsteps. He saw nobody, and the dusk had now so thickened that he could distinguish objects only at a small distance.

"This old man," he said to himself, "exaggerates the danger. There is no one after us now; and if there were, he could see but little."

He came rapidly to his determination, his desires prompting him to make light of all causes of apprehension; and, wheeling down the wharves also, he kept old Singleton's retreating figure constantly in his eye. He little thought that, when he wheeled from the Bay into another street, he placed himself under the very espionage which he flattered himself he had eluded, and which indeed, had failed, up to this moment, to come upon his tracks. It was in this very street that the keen eyes of his treacherous servant, John, still followed by Vaughan and the Hessians, had caught sight of old Singleton. The same treacherous scoundrel now instantly detected a something in the air and gait of the new-comer which reminded him of his master; but the dusk was now too great to enable him to reduce this to certainty, unless by a nearer approach, which, as he knew his master's temper, he was careful not to make alone. He waited accordingly, till Vaughan came up, when he expressed his belief that Proctor was just before them, a space of not more than fifty yards."

"Why, then, do you stop?" demanded Vaughan, eagerly.
"Why did you not dart upon him?"

"He will fight like a devil, major."

"Push on with me!"

"Hadn't we better hold on till the Hessians come up?"

"He is alone, you say?"

"Yes, sir; but old Singleton was ahead of him."

"And he is too old to give us any trouble. But do you run back and hurry on the Hessians. I will push on and keep our man in sight."

He was obeyed. Alone, he pressed forward, and with such speed as brought Proctor again in sight. The route led to a lower wharf—that in which we have seen Robert Singleton concealed. Something which Vaughan could not see, prompted Proctor suddenly to increase his pace. It was now growing difficult to distinguish objects at thirty yards. Vaughan's impatience would not allow him to delay. He knew but of the single enemy before him, and reasonably calculated that all that was necessary was to retard his flight for a few moments until the arrival of the spy with the Hessians. He quickened his walk, already hurried to a run, and suddenly found himself almost at the head of the wharf, with a group of shadowy figures upon it and a boat on one side, in which several persons were to be seen. Proctor was speaking with one of the persons in the boat. The sound of his voice was enough to bring out all the vindictive animosity of his pursuer. He pushed at once for the group, which opened as he drew nigh, leaving Proctor conspicuously before him, but with his back toward him. Vaughan seized upon his arm, exclaiming, as he did so—

"You are my prisoner, Major Proctor! Here is the order for your arrest from Colonel Balfour."

Proctor wheeled about, shook himself free, and with a sudden blow of the fist, delivered fairly in the face of his assailant, he sent him staggering back. But Vaughan instantly recovered himself, drew his sword, shouted to the emissary, John, with his Hessians, whom he supposed to be close behind him, and rushed with mortal fury upon his enemy. At this moment, Singleton's voice was distinctly heard to say—

"This determines it, Proctor; you have no alternative."

Proctor had drawn his sword the moment he had given Vaughan the blow. Their weapons now crossed; and the group on the wharf, seeing the approaching Hessians, with the spy, disappeared over the sides, completely concealed in the shadows of the wharf, and on the old hulk that lay there in the marsh.

Vaughan heard the cry of the treacherous servant announcing his approach, and he called to him while still fighting with Proctor—

“Seize the boat! The rebel, Singleton, is in it!”

The Hessians, with the spy, at once jumped upon the hulk, to the stern of which the boat was fastened. Scarcely had they done so, when the two former were seized by unseen enemies and violently thrown down upon the deck. John, the spy, however, continued to seize the fasts of the boat, and, stretching over, laid his hand upon the prow. A single blow from Robert Singleton with an oar, which he caught up suddenly, delivered roundly upon the head of the fellow, stunned him, and falling between into the dock, he went down like a stone, and never reappeared. Meanwhile, the contest between Proctor and Vaughan was continued with fearful violence. Both of them were wounded, though not dangerously, and Vaughan, aware in some degree, of the capture of the Hessians, and no longer hearing the voice of the spy, was losing all his caution in the fear of losing his prey. Proctor was never cooler in his life. The desperateness of his situation seemed to bring out all his character. Meanwhile, Singleton leaped ashore.

“We must put an end to this, Proctor. Lights are moving down toward us, and they are waving torches upon the eastern bastion. We can take and tie this worthy gentleman, and either leave him on the wharf or take him with us.”

“A moment!—only a moment more!” was the reply of Proctor, who felt his advantages. It scarcely needed so much. Almost while he was speaking, a desperate lunge of Vaughan threw wide his guard, and the prompt weapon of Proctor found its sheath in his bosom. He leaped up as he received the thrust, and fell forward upon his enemy, the sword breaking off short at the hilt. Singleton stooped to the body, which was utterly lifeless.

“It is done! And your flight is decided,” said he. “You have resisted the arrest of your superior, and your fate is sealed if you remain!”

Proctor offered no resistance; but silently suffered himself to be led away to the boat. It was pushed off the moment he was

seated. The inmates were six in number : Singleton, himself, Lockwood, the boy George Spidell, and two faithful negroes. The last four took the oars ; but of these little use was made, except to direct the course of the vessel, as the tide, now nearly at the flood, bore it in the required direction.

"These stars are shining out too brightly," said Lockwood, and may give those fellows on the bastion a glimpse of us. We must strike over for Haddrill's until out of sight, then take the tide for the marshes of Town Creek. You persist, Colonel Singleton, in going on the west side of the river?"

"Yes, certainly. My horses are hidden this side of the 'Quarter,' and such a course will be totally unsuspected. They will naturally expect us to strike over for Haddrill's."

"Oars, boys," said Lockwood ; "we must use them for awhile, at least, till we get fairly beyond the range of sight from that bastion. They are waving torches. They see something, that is certain."

"Yes, indeed ; and design to make us see something, too," said Singleton, as the roar of a twenty-four pounder shook the welkin. The grape, a thick shower, hustled over the heads of the fugitives.

"A civility designed for us ! They evidently see us."

"They will not see us long," answered Lockwood. "One or two more lusty pulls, my good boys, and they must aim at random."

Another and another shot followed ; but they were now quite wide of the object.

"Enough, boys ; that will answer. They see us no longer, and we may leave everything to the tide. All that need be done now may be left to that paddle. Hand it me, George."

The night deepened, and under its shadows the little boat once more approached the western banks of the Cooper. The channel called Town Creek received them, and they were already within the gorges of the marsh when they saw the lights of numerous boats setting forth from the city in pursuit, and all taking the route for Haddrill's.

"Safe for the present, colonel," said Lockwood ; "and the

sooner we part the better. You wish no other help? I can put you higher up if you desire it."

"No! no! take care of yourself now. I trust you will find that easy. For me, nothing is more so. I have horses at hand, such as none in garrison could overtake, unless, perhaps, Archy Campbell's, and no one will look for us in this quarter. What will you do, Lockwood?"

"Give yourself no concern about me. Daylight will probably find us up the Wando."

The parties separated; and, before dawn, Singleton and Proctor, with a few followers, were rapidly approaching the heads of Cooper river.

CHAPTER L.

CONCLUSION.

WE may imagine the fury of Balfour at the events of the night. Two of his victims had escaped; and one of his allies had perished in the very moment that he deemed his vengeance certain. But there was one victim still in his hands, and perhaps two. At all events, the commandant of Charleston was resolved that the fate of Colonel Walton should be sealed beyond redemption, unless with the sacrifice of his daughter. We have already mentioned that the trial of Walton had taken place. The whole proceeding was a miserable mockery of justice. The witnesses were unsworn, and the charges according to the plea put in for Walton, were denied to furnish just grounds for a criminal prosecution. He denied the jurisdiction of the court, and offered a protest against its proceedings, which was not received. His appeal lay to his country only, and the patriots fighting her battles to do justice to his memory and avenge his cause. He was found guilty, as a matter of course, and condemned, within twenty-four hours, to expiate his alleged treason upon the gallows. The citizens of Charleston were overwhelmed with consternation and surprise. They scarcely could believe that anything more was designed by the commandant and his court than simply to occasion a wholesome sentiment of terror. They proceeded, as we have said, by memorial, to implore the mercy which they did not doubt would be accorded them. They were to be terribly undeceived in this expectation. The ladies presented this petition in person, and were repulsed with austerity. The venerable men of the city, including numerous loyalists of rank, among whom was ex-governor Bull, a

public character greatly esteemed by all parties, renewed the petition, and all without success. In Balfour's dwelling Katharine Walton threw herself at his feet in a vain entreaty for her father's life.

"It is in your hands," was the only reply — "*you* have but to speak to save him. You know the conditions! By the God of heaven, Miss Walton, you shall have no other!"

She was taken away swooning.

The day came assigned for the execution. Colonel Walton was taken from the vaults of the provost, and carried up stairs, in the same building, to the northeast chamber, in the second story, where he was permitted to see his friends, and to habit himself properly for his painful public exhibition. Hither his daughter found her way at the earliest possible moment. There was a sense of utter desolation in her grief that left her almost speechless. But we shall not attempt to describe the agony, which needed not, and was indeed superior to the necessity for, any words to declare its intensity and extremity. There are some sorrows, over which the judicious painter always draws the veil, despairing to depict them. Such is our policy and necessity. At length, the moment came for parting. At this moment, Balfour appeared in the dungeon. He approached Katharine.

"It is not too late!" he whispered in her ears. "You have yet time! You may yet save him!"

The voice of Walton immediately followed the whisper of Balfour.

"Katharine!"

She looked up through her tears.

"Remember, my child! your oath! your oath!"

She sank down at her father's feet.

"Colonel Balfour," said Walton, "this is very unmanly. Do you not see the misery which you inflict? You embitter the last moments of my life."

"I would *save* your life!" was the answer.

"You can not do it by this process."

"There is then no other!" was the savage reply, and with these words, Balfour left the chamber. As he was about to de-

part, Katharine half rose with the purpose of arresting him, but her father grasped her by the arm.

"My child, my Kate, remember! Do not think to save the short remnant of my life by the sacrifice of your own. Remember your oath! It is my last command, my child, that you never wed this man!"

We forbear the rest of the scene. The moment came for separation, and with one agonizing embrace, one convulsive kiss upon her quivering lips, Walton tore himself away from his swooning daughter. For a moment after, she lay unconscious in the arms of her venerable kinswoman. Then, as she heard the roll of the melancholy drum without, signaling the movement of the sad procession, she started to her feet.

"Let us go," she cried, "I can not endure this agony and live! I must go to *him!* to *him!*"

"To whom, my child?"

"To Balfour! My father *must* be saved!"

Mrs. Singleton did not oppose her. It was impossible to do so. The two hurried to the carriage, which was in waiting, and it was driven with all speed to Balfour's quarters. Katharine, leaving Mrs. Singleton in the vehicle, hurried into the house. Without noting who was present, she exclaimed, as she entered the room in which hitherto she had found the commandant—

"Spare him, save him, Colonel Balfour—I consent to all you require!"

She was answered by Alfred Monckton—"Colonel Balfour is not here, Miss Walton."

"Oh! My God, do not tell me so! Where is he?"

"I have to go to him, even now, upon business," was the reply—"I will conduct you to him."

"Thanks! thanks! But hasten, or we shall be too late."

The young man assisted her into the carriage, and took a seat on the box. He ordered the coachman to drive at once to Miss Harvey's, whither Balfour had ordered him to bring certain papers. The horses were put to their speed, and were soon at the residence of that rival beauty whose charms had only failed with the commandant when Katharine Walton entered upon the scene.

Balfour, after leaving the provost, had hurried to his residence, full of rage and disappointment. Here he had left a few orders; then, mounting his horse, he had galloped up to the dwelling of the beauty he had so much neglected of late, seeking that consolation from the one damsel which he had failed to obtain from the other whom he most affected. His steed was fastened at the entrance, and he entered the house. As he did so, Moll Harvey cried out from the upper story, bidding him take a seat in the parlor, and promising to be down directly. She had not made her toilet; and now proceeded to this pleasant duty with a full sense of the situation of affairs, and a full determination to make herself as irresistible as possible.

It was while she was engaged in this employment that she heard the carriage which bore Kate Walton drive up to the door. Looking through the lattice, she saw her alight and enter. The servant conducted her into the parlor, whither she was followed by Alfred Monckton. Mrs. Singleton remained within the carriage. The moment Kate appeared, Balfour saw that he had conquered. He hastily took the papers from Monckton, and told him to wait in an adjoining room. The hurried words of Katharine, meanwhile, had announced her resignation to her fate.

“I consent, Colonel Balfour—only save him—hasten, before it is too late!”

“You will be mine, Katharine?”

“Yes! O yes! anything—only do not waste these precious moments.”

Meanwhile, Moll Harvey had descended to the lower story. She was standing beside the half-closed door as the words were spoken. She heard all that was said. She knew all that was determined upon. Through the crack of the door, she saw Balfour approach a table, and, with a pencil, hastily pen a few words on a scrap of paper; then, as he came toward the passage, she drew back and sheltered herself within a closet. Balfour came out, entered the adjoining room, and putting the paper into the hands of Alfred Monckton, bade him take his horse and gallop off, with all haste to the scene of execution. He was ordered to put the paper into the hands of Major Frazer, com-

manding the detachment. This done, Balfour returned to the apartment where he had left Katharine Walton.

Alfred Monckton had already left the house, and was about to mount the horse of Balfour, when Moll Harvey ran out to him. She carried a folded paper in her hands.

"Mr. Monckton," she cried, "approaching him, "Colonel Balfour sends you this. He says you must send him back the other paper. This is more satisfactory. Now hurry, as fast as you can, or you will be too late." The exchange was effected. Monckton could have no misgivings, and he immediately put his horse to the top of his speed for the scene of execution. Moll Harvey re-entered the house through the gate and garden. She stole silently up the back steps, and once more to her chamber. There she read the billet which she had taken from Monckton; the order to Major Frazer to "suspend the execution, and to conduct the prisoner, under a strong guard, to his (Balfour's) quarters." A bitter smile, full of triumphant malice, covered the face of the lovely traitoress, as she tore the scrap to atoms. She only said—"Wretch! I have baffled him at last!"

Colonel Walton was attended to the place of execution by Dr. Ramsay and other friends, and by the Rev. Mr. Cooper, an ecclesiastical clergyman. He walked; preferring this to the degrading progress in a cart. The military detachment assigned as his guard consisted of equal bodies of British and Hessian troops. These formed a hollow square at the place of execution; the Hessians on the right and left, the British in front and rear. Crowds were in attendance, but of foreigners only. The natives kept their houses, which were closed in mournful silence as the procession was in progress. It had already reached the scene of appointed sacrifice, a place beyond the fortifications, well known in that day as Radcliffe's Garden, before Alfred Monckton made his appearance. The preparations were all complete, when the courier, spurring onward, "hot with haste and fiery red," made his way to the presence of Major Frazer, and handed him the billet as from Colonel Balfour. Frazer opened it, turned it over, and exclaimed—

"What means this? There is nothing here! Are you sure, sir, that you have given me the right paper?"

"Quite sure!" was the answer; but the youth was greatly bewildered as he examined the seeming billet and found it a blank envelope only.

"I understand!" muttered Frazer. "It is just like Balfour. It was only to get rid of some importunate petitioners that he has sent this empty paper. I could have wished it otherwise, gentlemen," he remarked, turning to Ramsay and the other anxious friends of the condemned. "But it only rests with me to do my duty."

They expostulated with him, and insisted upon the evident intentions of Balfour in sending a messenger in such hot haste; the blank paper was evidently some mistake. But Frazer shook his head mournfully, but firmly.

"Gentlemen, this blank paper means everything! It especially commands me to do my duty, and shows me that no orders are designed to arrest it. Let the prisoner prepare himself. The minutes are nearly exhausted."

When Balfour, having despatched Monckton with the billet, returned to the parlor, he found Katharine Walton with her face covered by her hands, and leant upon the arm of the sofa. She was silent, but, at slow intervals, drew long convulsive sobs. Balfour undertook the work of soothing; but such a task required the agency of finer sensibilities than any in his possession. He either annoyed the sufferer, or failed to make any impression on her senses. When, however, his pertinacity fixed her attention, she hastily started up and exclaimed—

"Let me go now, Colonel Balfour, my aunt is in waiting, and I—I—should be at home. I am very sick and very weary."

"Mrs. Singleton has already gone home, dear Miss Walton, having left the carriage for you."

"Gone! gone! and I am here alone!" she exclaimed, with some surprise and annoyance.

"And why not, my dear Miss Walton? You are not alone. Who should better assert the right to protect and comfort you than he to whom you have given so precious a claim?"

“Comfort! comfort! Oh God, have mercy upon me! My father, when will he return?”

“Now, very soon.”

“Ah, thanks! thanks!”

It will not task the imagination to conceive the sort of comfort and consolation, mixed with bald professions of affection, which Balfour *would* attempt to bestow upon his companion; nor will it be hard to understand with what annoyance Katharine Walton heard them all. But she had adopted her resolution, and she submitted with resignation to his declarations, his soft tones, and honeyed assurances of love. Only, when he would have encircled her waist with his arm, did she revolt and resist. She could not, at such a moment, bring herself to submit to this — not so soon, at least.

We pass over an interval of time, which she felt to be equally tedious and full of anxieties. It was in a moment when Balfour was most pressing and solicitous that both the parties were suddenly startled by the sullen roar of a heavy cannon. Balfour started to his feet.

“Ha, that cannon! What can it mean?”

Katharine looked up with sudden terror.

“It is a signal!” she exclaimed. “Tell me — tell me, Colonel Balfour. Can it be — can it be that?”

She could say no more. Breathless, with hands extended, she advanced toward him, while, evidently annoyed and confounded, he approached the window and threw it open. His evident disquiet increased that of Katharine, who now impetuously appealed to him in respect to her father’s safety.

“He is safe!” he answered. “Quite safe, dear Miss Walton. He will be here directly.”

At this moment, Moll Harvey threw wide the door, and, dressed in the most splendid style, suddenly appeared before them. — Katharine looked up at her, but without any feeling of interest or surprise — with eyes, indeed, of vacancy. Balfour recoiled from the unexpected vision. Moll Harvey addressed herself to her unconscious rival. Her accents were full of scorn and fire.

“He tells you that your father is safe — that he will be here

Campbell was taken prisoner, disarmed, and placed under the guard of Nicholas Venning, of Christ Church parish, who was ordered to kill him if he attempted to escape. In a little while after, the fortune of the day began to change; the Americans were about to be repulsed; and, seeing this, Campbell became so impatient and so insubordinate that, after repeated threats and warnings, Venning put his orders into execution, and slew him. Here ends our chronicle.

It may be well to mention that, in our progress, we have dealt largely with real historical personages. Our facts have mostly been drawn from the living records. Our dialogues, our incidents, our portraits, have mostly a traditional, if not an historical origin. We may add that many of the details in the narrative of Colonel Walton have been borrowed from those in the career of the celebrated Colonel Hayne. It was Hayne who took Williamson prisoner, as described in our story. He himself was captured under the very circumstances given in the case of Walton: and the details of the execution are gathered from the lips of living witnesses.

C H E E N D

THE SCOUT



RICHARDSON DEL. 1850.

THE SCOUT

OR

THE BLACK RIDERS OF CONGAREE

BY W. GILMORE SIMMS, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "THE PARTISAN," "MELlichAMPE," "KATHARINE WALTON,"
"WOODCRAFT," "THE YEMASSEE," "GUY RIVERS," ETC.

"Failing I know the penalty of failure
Is present infamy and death. . . . pause not;
I would have shown no mercy, and I seek none."
MARINO PALISKA

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TO

COLONEL WILLIAM DRAYTON,

OF SOUTH CAROLINA,

I INSCRIBE THIS ROMANCE OF THE REVOLUTION IN OUR
NATIVE STATE.

THE AUTHOR.

THE SCOUT.

CHAPTER I.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY.—THE SWAMP RETREAT.

AT the period when our story opens, the colonies of North America united in resistance to the mother-country, had closed the fifth year of their war of independence. The scene of conflict was by this time almost wholly transferred from the northern to the southern colonies. The former were permitted to repose from the struggle; in their security almost ceasing to recognise the necessity of arms; while the latter, as if to compensate for their respite, in the beginning of the conflict, were subjected to the worst aspects and usages of war. The south, wholly abandoned to its fate by the colonies north of the Potomac, was unequal to the struggle single-handed. Their efforts at defence, however earnestly made, were for a time, apparently made in vain. Inexperienced in regular warfare, with officers as indiscreet and rash as brave, they were everywhere exposed to surprise and consequently to defeat. They lacked money, rather than men, experience and training, rather than courage, concentration and unity, rather than strength. The two frontier colonies, South Carolina and Georgia—most feeble and most exposed, as lying upon the borders of Florida, which adhered to the crown, and which had proved a realm of refuge to all the loyalists when driven out from the other colonies—were supplused by the Brit-

ish commanders to be entirely recovered to the sway of their master. They suffered, in consequence, the usual fortune of the vanquished. But the very suffering proved that they lived, and the struggle for freedom was continued. Her battles,

"Once begun,
Bequeathed from bleeding sire to son,
Though often lost,"

were never considered by her friends in Carolina to be utterly hopeless. Still, they had frequent reason to despair. Gates, the successful commander at Saratoga, upon whose great renown and feeble army the hopes of the south, for a season, appeared wholly to depend, had suffered a terrible defeat at Camden—his militia scattered to the four winds of Heaven—his regulars almost annihilated in a conflict with thrice their number, which, for fierce encounter and determined resolution, has never been surpassed; while he, himself, a fugitive, covered with shame and disappointment, vainly hung out his tattered banner in the wilds of North Carolina—a colony sunk into an apathy which as effectually paralysed her exertions, as did the presence of superior power paralyse those of her more suffering sisters. Conscious of indiscretion and a most fatal presumption—the punishment of which had been as sudden as it was severe—the defeated general suffered far less from apprehension of his foes, than of his country. He had madly risked her strength, at a perilous moment, in a pitched battle, for which he had made no preparation—in which he had shown neither resolution nor ability. The laurels of his old renown withered in an instant—his reputation was stained with doubt, if not with dishonor. He stood, anxious and desponding, awaiting, with whatever moral strength he could command, the summons to that tribunal of his peers, upon which depended all the remaining honors of his venerable head.

General Greene succeeded to the command of the miserable remnant of the southern army. Cool, prudent, and circumspect, rather than brilliant, as a soldier, this gentleman was, perhaps, one of the best that could be chosen for directing the efforts of a people whose impulses hut too frequently impaired their conduct—who were too eager to be wary, and who suffered per-

petually from the rash and headstrong courage of their native leaders and their own indifference to the usual duties which belong to a vigilant and cautious command. The enterprise which moved Greene to reconduct the continentals and the southern militia, back to South Carolina, then wholly in the possession of the British, has been described as singularly bold and audacious. But how he could have achieved the deliverance of the country, without pressing into it, we do not see. To enter the disputed province, to seek, find, and fight his enemy, was the very business for which he had been despatched, and the only question is as to the conduct which he should display, in contrast with that of Gates. His true merit lay in the prudence with which he prosecuted an enterprise, which the latter had sacrificed by conceit and improvidence. The genius of Greene was eminently cautious, and his progress in South Carolina was unmarked by any rashness of movement, or extravagance of design. He was very soon made conscious that, with the mere fragments of an army—and such an army!—naked men, undrilled militia, few in number, disheartened by defeat, unprovided with arms—he could hope for nothing but disaster, unless through the exercise of that ever-watchful thought, and rigorous prudence, by which, almost wholly, the great captain is distinguished. His wariness formed an essential part of his resolution, and quite as much as his valor, contributed to effect his object. If he did not always beat, he at length succeeded in finally baffling his opponents. He avoided the conflict which the more presumptuous Gates had too rashly invited. To baffle the invader, he well knew, was the best policy by which to conquer him. The fatigue of forced marches and frequent alarms to the soldier, in an unknown and hostile country, is more discouraging than the actual fight with a superior foe. Every hour of delay added to the army of Greene while it diminished that of the British. The militia recovered breath and courage, and once more rallied around the continental standard. Small but select bodies of troops came to her aid from the neighboring states. North Carolina began to arouse and shake herself free from her slumbers. Her yeomen began to feel the shame of previous flight and inaction. Virginia, though scarcely so active

as her own safety and sense of duty should have made her, was not altogether indifferent to the earnest entreaties for assistance of the general of the south; and from Maryland and Delaware came a band, few but fearless, and surpassed by none of all the troops that were ever raised in America. The tried and tough natives of the mountains and the swamps emerged once more from their hiding-places under their ancient leaders; more resolute in the cause of liberty, and more vigorous in their labors for its attainment, from the shame and the sorrow which followed their previous and frequent disappointments.

The countenance of the British commander became troubled as he surveyed the gathering aspects of evil in that horizon, from which he fondly fancied that he had banished every cloud. His troops were summoned to arms and to renewed activity; and Greene was no longer in a condition to elude the arms of his adversary. Nor did he now so much desire it. The accessions of force which his army had received, and which drew upon him the regards of Lord Cornwallis, had necessarily encouraged the American general, and inspirited his purposes. His policy, though still properly cautious, lost something of its seeming timidity; and he boldly penetrated, in the face of the foe, into the state which he came to deliver. A series of small and indecisive, but brilliant adventures, which followed the dispersion of his light troops over the country, contributed equally to enliven the hopes of the commander and the courage of his men. The battle of King's Mountain had been fought by the brave mountaineers of Virginia, and the two Carolinas, in which the British force under Ferguson—their ablest partisan commander in the south—was utterly annihilated. Tarleton, hitherto invincible, was beaten by Morgan at the Cowpens, with a vastly inferior army; while Marion, smiting the tories, hip and thigh, in the swamps below, and Sumter, in a succession of brilliant and rapid actions, in the middle country, had paralyzed the activity and impaired seriously the strength of these smaller parties of the British, which were employed to overawe the inhabitants and secure the conquests which had been already made. In an inconceivably short space of time, the aspect of things in South Carolina underwent a change. The panic which

followed the defeat of Gates, had worn off. Disaffection so effectually showed itself in every section of the state, that the British power was found active and operative only in those portions where they held strong garrisons. Greene, however while these events were passing, was kept sufficiently employed by the able captains who opposed him. Brought to action at Guilford, he was forced, rather than beaten, from the field; and a few days enabled him to turn upon his pursuer, and to dog his flight from the state which he could not keep, to that in which he became a captive.

But, in leaving Carolina, Cornwallis left the interests of his master in the custody of no inferior representative. Lord Rawdon, afterward the earl of Moira, succeeded him in the command. He was unquestionably one of the ablest general officers of the British army; and through a protracted trial of strength with his opponent, he sustained the duties of his trust with equal skill, vigilance, and valor. The descent of Greene into South Carolina, brought him into that same neighborhood which had proved so fatal to Gates. His appearance was followed by the sharp action of Hobkirk's Hill, in which Rawdon displayed many of those essential qualities of conduct which entitle him to the name of an able soldier. The field remained with the British, but it yielded them none but barren fruits. It gave them the triumph, but not the success. The victory was only not with Greene. It must have been, but for a misapprehension of his orders, on the part of one of his best officers, having command of a favorite regiment.

Our story opens at this period. The battle of Hobkirk's Hill was productive of effects upon both of the contending parties, which brought about an equal crisis in their fortunes. The losses of the two armies on that occasion, were nearly the same. But, in the case of Rawdon, the country offered but few resources against any external pressure; and immediate and utter ruin must have followed his defeat. He had exhausted the means, ravaged the fields, trampled upon the feelings, and mocked the entreaties of the surrounding inhabitants. Despair had taught them a spirit of defiance, and the appearance of an American army which was able to maintain its ground even

after defeat, encouraged them to give to that feeling its proper utterance.

Conwallis had long before complained to the British ministry that he was "surrounded by timid friends and inveterate foes;" and the diminution of British strength and courage, which necessarily followed the flight of that commander into Virginia, together with the defeats sustained at Cowpens and King's Mountain, naturally enough increased the timidity of the one, and the inveteracy of the other party. That atrocious and reckless warfare between the whigs and tories, which had deluged the fair plains of Carolina with native blood, was now at its height. The parties, in the language of General Greene, pursued each other like wild beasts. Pity seemed utterly banished from their bosoms. Neither sex nor age was secure. Murder lurked upon the threshold, and conflagration lighted up, with the blazing fires of ruin, the still, dark hours of midnight. The reckless brutality of the invader furnished a sufficient example and provocation to these atrocities; and the experience of ages has shown that hate never yet takes a form so hellish, as when it displays itself in the strifes of kindred.

It does not need that we should inquire, at this late day, what were the causes that led to this division among a people, in that hour so unseasonably chosen for civil strife—the hour of foreign invasion. It is sufficient for our present purpose that the fact, however lamentable, is equally unquestionable and well known. Our narrative seeks to illustrate some of the events which grew out of, and characterized, this warfare. We shall be compelled to display, along with its virtues of courage, patriotism, and endurance, some of its crimes and horrors! Yet vainly, as unwisely, would we desire to depict, in human language, its measureless atrocities. The heart would sicken, the mind revolt with loathing, at those hideous details, in which the actors seem to have studiously set themselves free from all the restraints of humanity. To burn and slay were not the simple performances of this reckless period and ravaged country. To burn in wantonness, and to murder in cold blood, and by the cruellest tortures, were the familiar achievements of the time;—and the criminal was too frequently found to exult over his evil deeds.

with the sanguinary enthusiasm of the Mohawk warrior, even though the avenging retribution stood beside him with warning finger and uplifted knife. The face of the country was overrun by outlaws. Detached bands of ruffians, formed upon the frontiers of Georgia, and in the wilds of Florida—refugees from all the colonies—availed themselves of the absence of civil authority to effect a lodgment in the swamps, the forests, and the mountains. These, mounted on fleet horses, traversed the state with the wind; now here, now there; one moment operating on the Savannah, the next on the Peedee; sometimes descending within sight of the smokes of the metropolis; and anon, building their own fires on the lofty summits of the Apalachian ridge.

Harassed by the predatory inroads of these outlawed squadrons, stung by their insults, and maddened by their enormities, the more civil and suffering inhabitants gathered in little bands for their overthrow; and South Carolina, at the period of our narrative, presented the terrible spectacle of an entire people in arms, and hourly engaging in the most sanguinary conflicts. The district of country called "Ninety-Six," in the neighborhood of which our story will partly lie, is estimated to have had within its borders, at the close of the Revolution, no less than fifteen hundred widows and orphans, made so during its progress. Despair seems to have blinded the one party as effectually to the atrocity of their deeds, as that drunkenness of heart, which follows upon long-continued success, had made insensible the other;—and as that hour is said to be the darkest which more immediately precedes the dawn, so was that the bloodiest in the fortunes of Carolina which ushered in the bright day of her deliverance. We now proceed with our narrative.

The dusky shadows of evening were approaching fast. Clouds, black with storm, that threatened momentarily to discharge their torrents, depended gloomily above the bosom of the Wateree. A deathlike stillness overhung the scene. The very breezes that had swayed the tops of the tall cypresses, and sported capriciously with the purple berries of the green vines that decorated them, had at length folded themselves up to slumber on the dark surface of the sluggish swamps below. No voice of bird or beast, no word of man, denoted, in that ghost-

like region, the presence of any form of life. Nothing in its aspects, certainly, could persuade the casual wayfarer to suspect that a single human heart beat within those wild and dark recesses. Gloomy, and dense, and dim, at all seasons, the very tribute of the spring in this—the generous gifts of flowers and fruitage—only served to increase the depth of its shadow in the rank exuberance of its vegetable life. The vines, and shrubs, and briars, massed themselves together in an almost solid wall upon its edge, and forbade to penetrate; and even where, through temporary vistas, the eye obtained a passage beyond this formidable barrier, the dismal lakes which it encountered—still and black—filled with the decayed trunks of past centuries, and surmounted by towering ranks of trees yet in the vigor of their growth, defied the examination of the curious, and seemed to rebuke, with frowning and threatening shadows, even the presumption of a search.

But, in the perilous times of our history, these seeming discouragements served the kindly purposes of security and shelter. The swamps of Carolina furnished a place of refuge to the patriot and fugitive, when the dwelling and the temple yielded none. The more dense the wall of briars upon the edge of the swamp, the more dismal the avenues within, the more acceptable to those who, preferring Liberty over all things, could there build her altars and tend her sacred fires, without being betrayed by their smokes. The scene to which our eyes have been addressed, still and deathlike as it appears, is full of life—of hearts that beat with hope, and spirits that burn with animation; and sudden, even as we gaze, the sluggish waters of the lake are rippling into tiny waves that betray the onward motion of some unwonted burden. In the moment of its deepest silence, a rustling is heard among the green vines and crowding foliage. A gentle strife takes place between the broken waters and the rude trunks of the cypresses; and the prow of an Indian canoe shoots suddenly through the tangled masses, and approaches the silent shore. There is no word—no voice. A single person stands upright in the centre of the little vessel and guides it in its forward progress through the still lagoon. Yet no dip of oar, no stroke of paddle betrays his efforts, and impairs the solemn

silence of the scene. His canoe speeds along as noiselessly and with as little effort, as did that fairy bark of Phædría sung by Spenser, which carried Sir Guyon over the Idle lake to the Enchanted island :—

“ Withouten oare or pilot it to guide,
Or winged canvass with the wind to fly.”

The navigator of our little canoe is indebted for her progress to no magical “pin,” such as impelled the vessel of Phædría and obeyed the least touch of that laughing enchantress. Still, the instrument which he employed, if less magical in its origin, was quite as simple in its use. It called for almost as little exertion of his arm. His wand of power was an ordinary cane, nearly twenty feet in length, the vigorous growth of the swamp around him, to the slender extremity of which, a hook, or finger, was fastened, formed out of the forked branches of some stubborn hickory ; one prong being tightly bound to the reed, by deer-sinews, while the other was left free, to take hold of the overhanging limbs of trees, or the waving folds of wandering vines or shrubs, impelling the bark forward in any direction, according to the will of the navigator. It was thus that our new acquaintance brought his “dugout” forward to the shore from the secret recesses of the Wateree swamp. Its yellow waters parted, without a murmur, before his prow, at the slightest touch of this simple agent ; and the obedient fabric which it impelled with a corresponding flexibility, yielding itself readily, shot from side to side, through the sinuous avenues of the swamp, as if endued with a consciousness and impulse of its own ; pressing along in silence and in shadow ; now darting freely forward where the stream widened into little lakelets ; now buried in masses of the thicket, so dense and low, that the steersman was compelled to sink upon his knees in order to pass beneath the green umbrageous arches.

In such a progress the scene was not without its romance. Picturesque as was this mode of journeying, it had its concomitants by which it was rendered yet more so. The instrument which impelled the vessel, drew down to the hand of the steersman the massy vines of the thousand varieties of wild grape with which the middle country of Carolina is literally covered

These fling themselves with the wind in which they swing and sport, arching themselves from tree to tree, and interlacing their green tresses until the earth below becomes a stranger to the sun. Their blue clusters droop to the hand, and hang around the brows of the fainting and feeble partisan, returning from the conflict. He forgets the cruelties of his fellow man, in solacing himself with the grateful tributes which are yielded him by the bounteous nature. Their fruits relieve his hunger and quench his thirst—their green leaves refresh his eye—their shadows protect him from the burning sunbeams, and conceal him from the pursuit of the foe.

Dark, wild, and unlovely as the entrance of the swamp might seem, still, to the musing heart and contemplative spirit it had its aspects of beauty, if not of brightness; and, regarded through the moral medium as a place of refuge to the virtuous and the good, when lovelier spots afforded none, it rises at once before the mind, into an object of sacred and serene delight. Its mysterious outlets, its Druid-like nooks, its little islands of repose, its solemn groves, and their adorning parasites, which clamber up and cling to its slender columns a hundred feet in air, flinging abroad their tendrils, laden with flaunting blossoms and purple berries—all combined to present a picture of strange but harmonious combination, to which the youthful steersman who guides our little bark is evidently not insensible. He pauses at moments in favorite spots, and his large blue eye seems to dilate as, looking upward, he catches some bright, but far and foreign glimpses of the heavens, through the ragged openings in the umbrageous forest. While he thus gazes upward, seemingly forgetful of the present in the remote, we may observe him at our leisure.

His was a countenance to invite and reward examination. Were the features of the face sure indices always of the individual character—which we do not believe—those of the person now before us would not misbeseem those of a great landscape painter. Could we suppose that the season and region of which we write were favorable to such employments, we might well suspect him of being a travelling artist. The calm, yet deep contemplative eye; the upward, outward look; the wan-

dering mood; the air of revery; the delicate mouth; the arching brow;—these, and other characteristics which are indefinable, would seem to indicate in the proprietor a large taste for the picturesque. Yet was there a something still about the stranger that declared, quite as strongly, for a stern decision of temper, a direct aim, an energetic will, and a prompt and rapid execution of his purposes. It would not, indeed, be altogether safe to say, that, when he paused in his progress through the swamp, it was not because of some more serious purpose than belonged to a desire to contemplate the picturesque in its aspects. A just caution, the result of that severe experience which the Carolinians had suffered in the beginning of their conflict with the mother-country, may have prompted him to wait, and watch, and listen, long before he approached the land. His movements were all marked by the vigilance of one who was fully conscious of the near neighborhood of danger. Before his vessel could emerge from the covert, and when a single moment would have thrust her against the shore, he grasped with his hook a swinging vine which he had already left behind him, and arrested her motion. His boat swung lightly upon her centre, and remained stationary for a brief instant, while, drawing from his vest a small whistle, made of the common reed, he uttered a clear, merry note, which went, waking up a hundred echoes, through the still recesses of the swamp. His whistle, thrice repeated, brought him as many faint responses from the foot of the hills to which he was approaching. As if assured by these replies, our steersman threw up his cane once more, grappled with a bough beyond him, gave a single pull, and the bark shot forward. A mass of vines and overhanging branches, almost reaching to the water, lay between him and the spot of shore to which his prow was directed. As he neared this barrier, he threw himself flat in his boat, and she passed under it like an arrow, rushing up, in the next moment, upon the gravelly shore. He leaped instantly upon the bank, drew the canoe forward to the shelter of a clump of bushes growing down to the water, and fastened her securely, and out of sight. Another whistle from the wooded hills above now seemed to indicate the route which he should take; and, promptly following where it led, he was soon joined

by one who appeared to have been calmly expecting his appearance. A description of the two thus meeting, with such a clue to their objects as may seem proper to be given at this early period in our progress, may well be reserved for another chapter.

CHAPTER II.

THE FRIENDS—A CONFERENCE.

THE stranger, as he leaped upon the solid earth, appeared of a noble and commanding presence. In shape he was symmetrically and vigorously made. Tall, erect, and muscular, his person was that of one who had been long accustomed to hardy and active exercises. In his movements there was a confident ease—the result equally of a fearless spirit and a noble form—which tallied well with a certain military exactness of carriage; commending his well-finished limbs to the eye, while conveying to the mind of the observer an impression, not less favorable, of the noble and firm character of their proprietor. Nor were the features of his countenance wanting in anything which was needful to support this impression. His face was full, but not fleshy; the skin of a clear red and white, which the summer sun had simply darkened into manliness. His eye, of a lively and intelligent blue, might have denoted a rather preponderating playfulness of temper, but for the sterner expression of his mouth, the lines of which were more angular than round, the lips being too thin for softness, and, when compressed, indicating a severe directness of purpose, which the gentler expression of his other features failed entirely to qualify. He had a lofty forehead, broad, intellectual and contemplative. His hair, which was of a dark brown, was long, and, like his beard, had been suffered to remain untrimmed, possibly as much in compliance with the laws of necessity as of taste. We have already intimated that the stranger was youthful. He had probably beheld

some twenty-five or thirty summers, though it may be that premature toils and trials had anticipated the work of time, and made him seem somewhat older than he really was. He had, in the *tout ensemble* of his face, the appearance of one who had just arrived at the equal maturity of mind and body.

His dress was simple, and characterized by as little pretension as could possibly be found in one who was not only young, but evidently in the military. In its material and make it corresponded with that of the ordinary woodmen of the country. His pantaloons consisted of a dark blue homespun, the legs being wrapped in leggings of a somewhat coarser texture and darker hue. From these the original dye had been obliterated in blotches, here and there; or so obscured by stains from the yellow waters of the swamp, with which the wearer had been so recently familiar, that it would require a very discriminating eye to determine at a glance of what color they originally were. A hunting-shirt of a deeper blue than that of his under clothes, and perhaps of better material, which reached midway between his hips and knees, completed the essential parts of his costume. This portion of the dress was evidently made with some regard to the shape, and, possibly, the tastes of the wearer; a matter not so certainly clear in the case of the pantaloons. It fitted closely, without a wrinkle, and displayed the symmetry and muscle of his form to the greatest possible advantage. It had been ornamented, it would seem, in better days, with a deep fringe of a color somewhat more showy than that of the garment; but of this only a few occasional traces now remained, to testify, much more effectually, to the trials through which it had passed, than its own former brightness and integrity. The little cape which surmounted the coat, and fell back upon the shoulders, had fared rather more fortunately than the rest of the garment, and formed no unseemly finish to the general fitness of the costume; particularly as the wearer, with a better taste than prevailed then, or has prevailed since, had freed his neck from all the buckram restraints of gorget, cravat, or stock—bandages which fetter the movements of the head, without increasing its dignity or comfort. Enough of the broad sunburned bosom was revealed by the open shirt in front, to display

that classic superiority of air of which modern fashions almost wholly deprive the noblest aspect. Upon his head, without shading his brow, rested a cap of otter-skin, rude and ample in its make, the work, most probably, of some favorite slave. A small yellow crescent, serving the purpose of a button, looped up one of the sides in the centre, and might, on occasion, have sustained a feather. Plain moccasins of buckskin, the original yellow of which had been entirely lost in the more doubtful colors acquired in the swamp, completed the externals of his dress. It may be added that he wore no visible armor; but once, as he stooped to fasten his skiff beside the shore, the butt of a heavy pistol might have been seen protruding from beneath the thick folds of his hunting-shirt. From the unnatural fullness of the opposite breast, it would not be rash to conjecture that this weapon of war was not without its fellow.

The stranger ascended from the banks and made his way toward the foot of the heights, that, skirting the northern edges of the Wateree, conduct the eye of the spectator to the lofty summits of the Santee hills beyond. Here he was joined by the person, whose answering signal he had heard, and, who had evidently been for some time expecting him. This was a man of middle size, stout, well-made, coarse in feature, strong of limb, active of movement, apparently without the refining influences of society and education, and evidently from the lower orders of the people. Let not this phrase, however, be understood to signify anything base or unbecoming. Though a poor man, our new acquaintance was not the work of one of nature's journeymen, fashioned when the "master hand" was weary. With head and feet equally bare, he carried the one with a virtuous erectness that could not be well misunderstood; while the other were set down with the freedom and fearlessness of a man conscious that he walked the soil of his native land in the full performance of the equal duties of the patriot and warrior. In this hand he grasped a rifle of immoderate length, the fractured stock of which, lashed together with buckskin thongs, bore tokens of hard usage in more respects than one.

The unquestionable poverty of this man's condition—which, indeed, was that of the whole American army—did not seem

to have any effect upon his deportment or to give him any uneasiness. He seemed not to know that his garments suffered from any peculiar deficiencies; and never did the language of a light heart declare itself with so little reservation from a blue eye and a good-natured physiognomy. The slight cloud of anxiety which hung at moments above his brow, and which gathered there in consequence of cares of no ordinary kind, could not long, at any time, withstand the buoyant action of the cheerful spirit within. This constantly shone out from his face, and spoke aloud in the clear, ringing tones of his manly and not unmusical accents. Drawing nigh to our first acquaintance, he grasped his hand with the joyous look in a warm manner of one who felt, in the meeting with his comrade, something of a sentiment far stronger than that which governs the ordinary friendships among men. Nor was the manner of his comrade less decided, though, perhaps, more quiet and subdued. The behavior of the twain was that of an intimacy unbroken from boyhood, and made mutually confident by the exercise of trusts which had been kept equally sacred by both the parties.

“Well, Clarence, I’m glad you’ve come. I’ve been waiting for you a’most two hours. And how goes it in the swamp—and did you git the letters?”

“I did: all’s well with us—pretty much as when you left. But how with you, Jack? What news do you bring? Is the coast clear—have the light troops gone in?”

“Well, I reckon I may say yes. Greene’s drawed off from Camden sence the brush at Hobkirk’s, and there’s no telling jest now which way he’s going. As for Marion, you know its never easy to say where to look for him. Lee’s gone down on the s’arch somewhere below, and we’re all to be up and busy at short notice. I hear tell of great things to do. Our gin’ral, Sumter, is in motion, and picking up stragglers along the Catawba. I reckon he’ll soon be down, and then gallop’s the word. Something too I hear of Colonel Tom Taylor at Granby, and—”

“Enough, enough, Jack; but you say nothing of Butler and his men? Are they out of the way—are they off? If you know nothing about him—”

“Well, I reckon they’re at Granby by this time. They’ve

given up the hunt as a bad job. I saw Joe Clinch, one of his troop, only two days ago, and gin him a sort of hint that the chap they were after was more like to be found above the Congaree than in these parts. 'For what's to save him,' I said to Joe, 'down here in this neighborhood, where we're all true blue, and he a firehot tory?' That was a good reason for Clinch and all his troop, I reckon. They tuk it for one, and by peep of dawn, they were streaking it along the river road. They've got to 'Ninety-Six,' by this time, and even if they ha'n't, it's all the same to us. They're out of your way.'

"But you did wrong, John Bannister, in saying that Edward Conway was a tory. He himself denies it."

"Well, Clarence, that's true, but I don't see that his denying it makes much difference. It's natural enough that a man should say he's no tory when he's in a whig camp. The virtue of a whole skin depends upon it. There's a chance of broken bones if he says otherwise, which Ned Conway ain't a going to resk."

"At least, for my sake, John Bannister, give Edward Conway the benefit of your doubts," replied the other, with an expression of grave displeasure on his countenance. "We do not know that he is a tory, and the best of men have been the victims of unjust suspicion. I must repeat that you did wrong, if you loved me, in calling him by such a name."

"Ah, Clarence, he's your hafe-brother, and that's the reason you ain't willing to believe anything agin him; but I'm dubious I said nothing worse than the truth when I told Clinch he was a tory. I'm sure the proofs agin him would have hung up many a tall chap like himself."

"No more, Jack Bannister—no more," said the other, gloomily. "It is enough that he is my brother. I am not willing to examine his demerits. I know, and acknowledge to you, that many things in his conduct look suspicious; still I prefer to believe his word—his solemn oath—against all idle reports—reports, which are half the time slanders, and which have destroyed, I verily believe, many lives and characters as worthy as our own. You know that I have no reason to love Edward Conway. We have never been friends, and I have no partialities

in his favor. Still, he is the son of my father, and I am bound to defend him while I remain unconvinced of his treachery. I am only afraid that I am too willing to believe what is said in his prejudice. But this I will not believe so long as I can help it. He solemnly assures me he has never joined the tories. He would scarcely swear to a falsehood."

"Well, that's the same question, Clarence, only in another language. The man that would act a lie, wouldn't stop very long to swear to one. Now, if Edward Conway didn't jine the tories, who did he jine? He didn't jine us, did he? Did he swear to that, Clarence?"

"No! no! Would to God he could!"

"Well, then, what is it that he docs say? I'm a-thinking that it's good doctrine to believe, in times like these, that the man that ain't with us is agin us. Let him show what he did with himself sence the fall of Charleston. He warn't there. You don't see his name on the list of prisoners—you don't hear of his parole, and you know he's never been exchanged. It mought be that he went in the British regiments to the West Indies, where they carried a smart chance of our people, that wouldn't ha' got any worse character by taking to the swamps as we did. Does he say that he went there?"

"He does not—he declines giving any account of himself; but still denies, most solemnly, that he ever joined the tories."

"I'm mightly afeard, Clarence—now, don't be angry at what I'm a-going to say—but I'm mightly afeard Edward Conway ain't telling you the truth. I wouldn't let him go free—I'd hold him as a sort of prisoner and keep watch upon him. You've saved him when he didn't deserve to be saved by anybody, and least of all by you;—and you have a sort of nateral right to do with him jest as you think proper and reasonable. I'm for your keeping him, like any other prisoner, and counting him in at the next exchange. He'll go for somebody that'll pull trigger for his country."

"Impossible! How can you give me such counsel? No, no, Jack, let him be all that you think him, the tory and the traitor, still he comes from my father's loins, and though another mother gave us suck, yet I feel that I should defend him as a brother,

though he may not be altogether one. He shall suffer no harm at hands of mine."

"Well, I'm sure I don't say he ought. To keep him under a strong thumb and forefinger—to keep him, as I may say, out of mischief and out of danger till the time of exchange comes round, won't be to do him any harm. It's only one way of feeding a mouth that, mought be, couldn't feed itself so well in these tough times; and taking a little Jamaica from other mouths that mought like it jest as well, and desERVE it a great deal better."

"What, Jack, do you begrudge Edward Conway the pitiful fare which we can give him in the swamp? You are strangely altered, Jack, toward him. You were once his playmate in boyhood as well as mine."

"Yes, Clarence, and 'twas then, so far back as them same days of our boyhood—and they were mighty sweet days, too, I tell you—that I found him out, and I'arned to mistrust him. God knows, Clarence, and you ought to know too, that Jack Bannister would like, if he could, all the flesh and blood in this world that was ever a kin to your'n. I tried mighty hard to love Ned Conway as I loved you, but it was like fighting agin natur'. I tried my best, but couldn't make it out with all my trying; and when I caught him in that business of the dock tailed horse—"

"Do not remind me of these matters, now, Jack, I'm afraid I remember them too well already."

"You're only too good for him, Clarence. I somehow almost think he ain't naterally even a half-brother of your'n any how. You don't look like him; neither eye, nor mouth, nor nose, nor chin, nor hair, nor forehead—all's different as ef you ha'd come from any two families that lived at opposite eends of the river, and never seed one another. But, as you say, I won't 'mind you of any matters that you don't want to hear about. Them days is over with me, and with him; and so I'll shut up on that subject. As for begrudging him the bread and bacon, and the drop of Jamaica, sich as we git in the swamp yonder—well, I won't say nothing, because, you see, I can't somehow think you meant to say what you did. All that I do say, Clarence, is, that I wish I

had enough to give him that would persuade him to show clean hands to his friends and blood-kin, and come out for his country, like every man that has a man's love for the airth that raised him."

"I know you mean him no wrong, Jack, and me no pain, when you advise me thus; but my word is pledged to Edward Conway, and I will keep it, though I perish."

"And don't I tell you to keep it, Clarence? You promised to save him from Butler's men, that was a-hunting him; and what better way than to keep him close from sight; for, if he once gits a-going agin, and they find his tracks, it won't be your holdness or my quickness that'll git him into the swamp so easily. If Butler's men hadn't been up-countrymen, that didn't onderstand swamp edication, no how, he wouldn't have had such a quiet time of it where we put him. Well, you've done what you promised, and what, I reckon, every man was bound to do by his blood-kin. You've saved him from his inemies; but there's no need you should give him your best nag that he may gallop full-speed into their pastures. Now, that's what you're a-thinking to do. And why should you? If he ain't a tory, and hasn't been one, why shouldn't he be a whig? Why shouldn't he do what he ought to ha' done five years ago—jine Sumter's men, or Marion's men, or Pickins' men, or any men that's up for the country—and run his bullets with a tory's name to each? I don't think Ned Conway a coward, no how, and when he won't come out for his country, at a pushing time like this, I can't help considering him a mighty suspicious friend."

"Enough, Jack; the more you speak, and I think, of this matter, the more unhappy it makes me," replied the other. "If I dared to think, I should probably come to more serious conclusions than yourself on the subject of my brother's conduct; which, I confess is altogether inscrutable. I have only one course before me, and that is to set him free, even as he desires, and let him choose his own route hence forward. I have not spared argument to persuade him to our ranks, and he holds out some hopes to me, that when he has finished certain private business he will do so."

"Private business! Lord ha' mercy upon us! How can a

body talk of private business, when throat-cutting is so public? — When there's a sort of Injin bounty for scalps, and it takes more than a man's two hands to keep his own skin and teeth from going off, where they are worth their weight in gold? Private business! Look you, Clarence, did you think to ask him when he had last seen Miss Flora Middleton?

"No, I did not," returned the other, abruptly, and with some impatience in his manner. "Why should I ask him that? I had no reason to suppose that he had any particular reason for seeing her at this, or at any other time."

"Now, Clarence, you needn't be telling me that, when I know so much better. I know that if he hasn't a reason for seeing her, he's always had a mighty strong wish that way; and as for your own feelin's, Lord bless you, Clarence, it's no fault of your'n, if every second man in the regiment don't know the soft place in the colonel's heart by this time, and can't put his finger on it whenever he pleases. If you love Flora Middleton there's no harm in it; and if Edward Conway loves her too—"

He paused, and looked at his companion with the air of one who is doubtful of the effect of that which he has already said.

"Well! What then?" demanded the other.

"Why, only, there's no harm, perhaps, in that either."

"Ay, but there is, John Bannister, and you know it;" cried the other, almost fiercely. "Edward Conway knew that I loved Flora Middleton long before he had ever seen her."

"Very true; but that's no good reason why he shouldn't love her when he did see her, Clarence."

"But it is good reason why he should not seek her with his love."

"I reckon, Clarence, he don't much stand upon such a reason. There's nothing brotherly in love matters, Clarence; and even if there was, Ned Conway is about the last person to make much count of it."

"He does—he shall! Nay, on this point I have his assurance. He tells me that he has not sought her—he has not seen her for months."

"And did Edward Conway really tell you so, Clarence?"

"He did—it was almost his last assurance when I left him."

“Then he told you a most despicable and abominable lie. He has seen her within the last three weeks.”

“Ha! how know you?”

“From little Joe, the blacksmith, that was down by Watson’s before it was taken from the British. Little Joe went with him to Brier Park, and saw him and Miss Flora in the piazza together.”

The young man clutched the butt of the pistol in his bosom with a convulsive grasp, but soon relaxed it. He struck his forehead, the next moment, with his open palm, then strode away from his companion, as if to conceal the emotion which he could not so easily overcome.

“Well,” he exclaimed, returning, “I had a strange fear—I know not why—that there was something insincere in his assurance. He made it voluntarily—we had not named her—and even as he spoke, there was a something in his face which troubled me, and made me doubtful of his truth. But he will go too far—he will try the force of blood beyond its patience.”

“There’s nothing, Clarence, in the shape of licking that such a person don’t deserve. I followed out more of his crooks than one, years ago, when there was no war; and he had all the tricks of a tory even then.”

“That he should basely lie to me, and at such a moment! When I had risked life to save him!—When!—but let me not grow foolish. Enough, that I know him and suspect him. He shall find that I know him. He shall see that he can not again cheat me with loving language and a Judas kiss.”

“Ah, Clarence, but you can cheat yourself. He knows how quick you are to believe; and when he puts on them sweet looks, and talks so many smooth words, and makes b’lieve he’s all humility, and how sorry he is for what he’s done, and how willing he is to do better—and all he wants is a little time—as if ever a man wanted time to get honest in! Look you, Clarence, you’re my colonel, and what’s more, I’m your friend—you know I love you, Clarence, better than one man ever loved another, and jest as well as Jonathan ever loved David, as we read in the good book; but, with all my love for you, Clarence, d—n my splinters, if you let Ned Conway cheat you any longer with

his sweet words and sugar promises, I'll cut loose from you with a jerk that'll tear every j'int out of the socket. I won't be the friend of no man that lets himself be cheated. As for hating Ned Conway, as you sometimes say I do, there, I say, you're clean mistaken. I don't hate him—I mistrust him. I've tried mighty hard to love him, but he wouldn't let me. You know how much I've done to save him from Butler's men; but I saved him on your account, not because I think he deserves to be saved. I'm dub'ous that he is a tory, and a rank tory too, if the truth was known, jest as they charge it upon him. I'm dub'ous he'll jine the British as soon as he can git a chance; and I'm more than dub'ous, that, if you don't git before him to your mother's plantation, and run the niggers into the swamp out of his reach, he'll not leave you the hair of one—he'll have 'em off to Charleston by some of his fellows, and then to the West Injies, before you can say Jack Robinson, or what's a'most as easy, Jack Bannister. There's another person I think you ought to see about, and that's Miss Flora. Either you love her, or you don't love her. Now, if you love her, up and at her, at once, with all your teeth sot, as if you had said it with an oath; for though I know this ain't no time to be a-wiving and a-courting, yet, when the varmints is a-prowling about the poultry-yard, it's no more than sense to look after the speckled pullet. Take a fool's wisdom for once, and have an eye to both eends of the road. Go over to the plantation, and when you're thar', you can steal a chance to cross over to Middleton's. It's my notion you'll find Ned Conway at one place or t'other."

"I'll think of it," said Clarence, in subdued tones; "mean-time, do you take the canoe back to the island and bring him out. The horses are in readiness?"

"Yes, behind the hill. I'll bring him out if you say so, Clarence; but it's not too late to think better of it. He's safe, for all parties, where he is."

"No, no, Jack; I've promised him. I'll keep my promise. Let him go. I fear that he has deceived me. I fear that he will still deceive me. Still I will save him from his enemies, and suppress my own suspicions. It will be only the worse for him if he does me wrong hereafter."

‘Clarence, if he turns out to be a tory, what’ll our men say to hear you harbored him?’

‘Say!—perhaps, that I am no better.’

‘No, no! they can’t say *that*—they sha’n’t say it, when Jack Bannister is nigh enough to hear, and to send his hammer into the long jaws that talk sich foolishness; but they’ll think it mighty strange, Clarence.’

‘Hardly, Jack, when they recollect that he is my father’s son.’

‘Ah, Lord, there’s mighty few of us got brothers in these times in Carolina. A man’s best brother now-a-days is the thing he fights with. His best friend is his rifle. You may call his jack-knife a first-cousin, and his two pistols his eldest sons; and even then, there’s no telling which of them all is going to fail him first, or whether any one among ’em will stick by him till the scratch is over. Edward Conway, to my thinking, Clarence, was never a brother of your’n, if ‘brother’ has any meaning of ‘friend’ in it.’

‘Enough, enough, Jack. Leave me now, and bring him forth. I will do what I promised, whatever may be my doubts. I will guide him on his way, and with this night’s work acquit myself of all obligations to him. When we next meet, it shall be on such terms as shall for ever clear up the shadows that stand between us. Away, now!—it will be dark in two hours, and we have little time to waste. The storm which threatens us will be favorable to his flight.’

CHAPTER III.

THE RETROSPECT—THE FUGITIVE.

THE dialogue between the two friends, which has just been given, will convey to the mind of the reader some idea of the situation of the parties. We have not aimed to describe the manner of this dialogue, preferring infinitely that the interlocutors should speak entirely for themselves. It may be stated in this place, however, that, throughout the interview, the sturdy counsellor, whose honest character and warm friendship constituted his perfect claim to speak unreservedly to his superior, betrayed a dogged determination not to be satisfied with the disposition which the latter had resolved to make of one whom he was pleased to consider in some sort a prisoner. On the other hand, the younger of the two, whom we have known by the name of Clarence Conway, and who held a colonel's command over one of those roving bodies of whig militia, which were to be found at this period in every district of the state—though resolute to release his brother from the honorable custody in which circumstances had placed him—still seemed to regret the necessity by which he was prompted to this proceeding. There were various feelings contending for mastery in his bosom. While he did not believe in the charges of political treachery by which his half-brother was stigmatized, he was yet anything but satisfied that his purposes were politically honest or honorable. Equally dubious with his companion on the subject of Edward Conway's principles, he was yet not prepared to believe in the imputation which had been cast upon his performances. He suspected him, not of fighting for the enemy, but of the meaner and less daring employment, of speculating in the necessities of the country; and, in some way or other, of craftily availing himself of its miseries and wants, to realize that wealth, the passion for which constituted, he well knew, a leading and greedy appetite in the character of his kinsman.

Clarence Conway was the youngest son of a gentleman who came from the West Indies, bringing with him an only child—then an infant—the fruit of a first marriage with a lady of Barbadoes, who died in bringing it into the world. The graceful form, pleasing manners, and varied intelligence of this gentleman, gained him the favor of a young lady of the Congaree, who became his wife. One son, our hero, was born to this union; and his eyes had scarcely opened upon the light, when his father fell a victim to fever, which he caught in consequence of some rash exposure among the swamps of the low country. The infant, Clarence, became the favorite of his grandparents, by whom he was finally adopted. He thus became the heir of possessions of a vastness and value infinitely beyond those which, by the laws of primogeniture, necessarily accrued to his half-brother.

The anxiety of Edward Conway to be the actual possessor of his rights, became so obvious to all eyes, that Mrs. Conway yielded him early possession, soon after her husband's death, and retired to one of the plantations which had descended from her father to her son. Edward Conway did not long retain the estate left him by his father. He was sagacious or fortunate enough to sell it, and realize its value in money, before the strifes of the Revolution became inevitable. With the conquest of Carolina by the British, he almost disappeared from sight; but not until himself and half-brother had already come into conflict on grounds which did not involve any reference to the politics of the country. This collision between them was of such a nature—already hinted at in the previous chapter—as to bring into active exercise the anger of the one, and the dissimulation of the other. To Clarence Conway, therefore, the unfrequent appearance of Edward afforded but little discontent. The late return of the latter, under circumstances of suspicion—under imputations of political treachery, and accusations of crime—now bewildered the more frank and passionate youth, who lamented nothing half so much as to be compelled to call him kinsman. He knew the wilfulness of heart which characterized him, and dreaded lest he should abuse, in a respect purely personal, the freedom which he was about to confer upon him. His

own ability to follow, and to watch the object of his suspicions, was very limited at this period. His movements were governed by his military position, by prudence, and certain other relations of a more private nature, which shall be considered as we proceed.

With no such restraints as these, and once more safe from the dangers which had compelled him to seek shelter at the hands of his brother in the swamp, the future conduct of Edward Conway filled the mind of Clarence with many apprehensions; the more strongly felt, since his falsehood, in a particular respect, had been revealed by his companion. There was, as the latter had phrased it, a weak or tender spot in the bosom of Clarence Conway, which led him to apprehend everything of evil, should Edward prove false to certain pledges which he had voluntarily made, and proceed to a dishonorable use of his liberty. But it was a point of honor with him not to recede from his own pledges; nor to forbear, because of a revival of old suspicions, the performances to which they had bound him. Yet, in the brief hour that followed the departure of Jack Banister, how much would his young commander have given, could he have taken his counsel—could he have kept, as a prisoner that person whose passions he well knew, and whose dissimulation he feared. He thus nearly argued himself into the conviction—not a difficult one at that period—that it was his public duty to arrest and arraign, as a criminal to his country, the person against whom the proofs were so strikingly presumptive.

As he reflected upon this subject, it seemed to astonish even himself, the degree of criminality which he was now willing to attach to his kinsman's conduct. How was it that he had become so generally suspected? How easy, if he were able, to prove his fidelity? Why was he absent from the field? Where had he been? Though proof was wanting to show that he had been active in the British cause, yet none was necessary to show that he had been wholly inactive for the American. More than once, in the interval which followed from the first futile attempts to the final and successful invasion of the state, by the enemy, had Clarence sought him, to stimulate his patriotism, and urge him to the field. All their conferences were devoted to this object

the youth sometimes assuming a language in the controversy, which nothing but the purity of his patriotism and his own obvious disinterestedness, could have justified from the lips of a younger brother.

But his exhortations fell upon unheeding ears—his arguments in barren places. There were no fruits. Edward Conway contrived with no small degree of art to conceal his real sentiments, at a time when the great body of the people were only too glad to declare themselves, either on one side or the other. Subsequently, when the metropolis had fallen, the same adroitness was exercised to enable him to escape from the consequences of committal to either. How this was done—by what evasions, or in what manner—Clarence Conway was at a loss to understand.

As the war proceeded, and the invasion of the colony became general, the active events of the conflict, the disorders of the country, the necessity of rapid flight, from point to point, of all persons needing concealment, served to prevent the frequent meeting of the kinsmen;—and circumstances, to which we have already adverted, not to speak of the equivocal political position of the elder brother, contributed to take from such meetings what little gratification they might have possessed for either party. Whenever they did meet, the efforts of Clarence were invariably made, not to find out the mode of life which the other pursued, but simply to assure himself that it was right and honorable. To this one object all his counsels were addressed; but he was still compelled to be content with a general but vague assurance from the other, that it was so. Still there was one charge which Edward Conway could not escape. This was the omission of that duty to his country, which, in a season of invasion, can not be withheld without dishonoring either the manhood or the fidelity of the citizen. Clarence was not willing to ascribe to treachery this inaction; yet he could not, whenever he gave any thought to the subject, attribute it to any other cause. He knew that Edward was no phlegmatic; he knew that he was possessed of courage—nor courage merely; he knew that a large portion of audacity and impulse entered into his character. That he was active in some cause, and con-

stantly engaged in some business, Edward Conway did not himself seek to deny. What that business was, however, neither the prayers nor the exhortations of Clarence and his friends could persuade him to declare; while the discovery of a circumstance, by the latter, which led him to apprehend the interference of the former in another field than that of war, contributed still farther to estrange them from each other. Enough now has been said to render the future narrative easy of comprehension.

While, with vexing and bitter thoughts, Clarence Conway awaited the progress of his companion, with the fugitive whom he had given into his charge, Supple Jack (for that was the *nom de guerre* conferred by his comrades upon the worthy woodman, in compliment to certain qualities of muscle which made his feats sometimes remarkable) penetrated into the recesses of the swamp, with a degree of diligence which by no means betokened his own disposition of mind in regard to the particular business upon which he went. But Supple Jack was superior to all that sullenness which goes frowardly to the task, because it happens to disapprove it. As a friend, he counselled without fear; as a soldier, he obeyed without reluctance.

He soon reached the little island on the edge of the Wateree river, where Clarence Conway had concealed his kinsman from the hot hunt which had pursued him to the neighborhood. So suddenly and silently did he send his canoe forward, that her prow struck the roots of the tree, at whose base the fugitive reclined, before he was conscious of her approach.

The latter started hastily to his feet, and the suspicious mood of Supple Jack was by no means lessened, when he beheld him thrust into his bosom a paper upon which he had evidently been writing.

To the passing spectator Edward Conway might have seemed to resemble his half-brother. They were not unlike in general respects—in height, in muscle, and in size. The air of Clarence may have been more lofty; but that of Edward was equally firm. But the close observer would have concurred with the woodman, that they were, as kinsman, utterly unlike in almost every other respect. The aspect of Clarence Conway was

bright and open, like that of an unclouded sky; that of Edward was dark, reserved and lowering. There was usually a shyness and a suspiciousness of manner in his glance and movement; and, while he spoke, the sentences were prolonged, as if to permit as much premeditation as possible between every syllable. His smile had in it a something sinister, which failed to invite or soothe the spectator. It was not the unforced expression of a mind at ease—of good-humor—of a heart showing its clear depths to the glances of the sun. It was rather the insidious lure of the enchanter, who aims to dazzle and beguile.

As such only did our woodman seem to understand it. The strained and excessive cordiality of Edward Conway, as he bounded up at his approach—the hearty offer of the hand—met with little answering warmth on the part of the former. His eye encountered the glance of the fugitive without fear, but with a cold reserve; his hand was quickly withdrawn from the close clutch which grasped it; and the words with which he acknowledged and answered the other's salutation were as few as possible, and such only, as were unavoidable. The fugitive saw the suspicion, and felt the coldness with which he was encountered. Without seeming offended, he made it the subject of immediate remark.

“Ha, Jack, how is this? Friends—old friends—should not meet after such a fashion. Wherefore are you so cold? Do you forget me? Have you forgotten that we were boys together, Jack—playmates for so many happy years?”

“No, no! I hain't forgotten anything, Edward Conway, that a plain man ought to remember;” replied the woodman, taking literally the reproach of his companion. “But we ain't boys and playmates any longer, Edward Conway. We are men now, and these are no times for play of any sort; and there's a precious few among us that know with whom we can play safely, nowadays, without finding our fingers in the wolf's mouth.”

“True enough, Jack; but what's true of other people needn't be true of us. Times change; but they shouldn't change friends. We are the same, I trust, that we have ever been to one another.”

This was said with an eager insinuating manner, and the hand of Conway was a second time extended to take that of the other. But, without regarding the movement, Supple Jack replied with a blunt resoluteness of demeanor, which would most effectually have rebuffed any less flexible spirit:—

“I reckon we a’n’t, Edward Conway, and it’s of no use to beat about the bush to find out what to say. Times change and we change, and it’s onnatural to expect to keep the same face in all weathers. I know there’s a mighty great change in me, and I’m thinking there’s the same sort of change going on in a’most everybody. I used to be a quiet peaceable sort of person, that wouldn’t hurt a kitten; and now I’m wolfish more than once a week, and mighty apt to do mischief when I feel so. I used to believe that whatever a pair of smooth lips said to me was true, and now I suspicious every smooth speaker I meet, as if he wor no better than a snake in the grass. ’Tain’t in my natur to keep the same face and feclin’s, always, any more than the weather, and I tell you plainly I’m quite another sort of person from the boy that used to play with you, and Clarence Conway, long time ago.”

“Ah, Jack, but you hav’n’t changed to him—you are the same friend to Clarence Conway as ever.”

“Yes, bless God for all his marcies, that made me love the boy when he was a boy, and kept the same heart-in me after he came to be a man. I a’n’t ashamed to say that I love Clarence the same as ever, since he never once, in all my dealings with him, boy and man, ever gin me reason to distrust him. He’s mighty like an oak in two ways—he’s got the heart of one, and there’s no more bend in him than in an oak.”

The cheek of the fugitive was flushed as he listened to this simple and earnest language. He was indiscreet enough to press the matter farther.

“But why should you distrust me, Jack Bannister? You have known me quite as long as you have known Clarence, we have played as much together—”

“Ay!” exclaimed the other abruptly, and with a startling energy. “But we hav’n’t fou’t together, and bled together, and slept together and starved together, Edward Conway. You

hav'n't been so ready as Clarence to come out for your country. Now, I've starved in his company, and run, and fou't, and been with him in all sorts of danger, and he's never been the first to run, and he's always been the last to feel afraid, and to show that he was hungry. For nine months we had but one blanket between us, and that was half burnt up from sleeping too close to the ashes one cold night last Christmas. It's sich things that made us friends from the beginning, and it's sich things that keep us friends till now. You don't seem altogether to remember, that you and me war never friends, Edward Conway, even when we war playmates; and the reason was I always mistrusted you. Don't think I mean to hurt your feelings by telling you the truth. You're a sort of prisoner, you see, and it would be mighty ongenteel for me to say anything that mought give offence, and I ax pardon if I does; but as I tell you, I mistrusted you from the beginning, and I can't help telling you that I mistrust you to the eend. You ha'n't got the sort o' ways I like, and when that's the case, it's no use to strain one's natur' to make a liking between feelings that don't seem to fit. Besides, you hev' a bad standing in the country. These men of Butler's swear agin you by another name, and it looks mighty suspicious when we come to consider that none of the whigs have anything to say in your behalf."

"One thing is certain, John Bannister," replied the fugitive composedly; "you at least preserve your ancient bluntness. You speak out your mind as plainly as ever."

"I reckon its always best," was the answer.

"Perhaps so, though you do me injustice, and your suspicions are ungenerous. It is unfortunate for me that, for some little time longer I must submit to be distrusted. The time will come, however, and I hope very soon, when you will cease to regard me with doubt or suspicion."

"Well, I jine my hope to your'n in that matter; but, till that time comes round, Edward Conway, I mought as well say to you that we are *not* friends, and I don't think it 'ill make us any nearer even if you war to prove that you're no tory. For why—I know that you're no friend to Clarence, for all he's done for you."

“Ha, Bannister:—how—what know you?”

“Enough to make me say what I’m saying. Now, you hear me, jest once, for the first and last time that I may ever have a chance of letting you see my mind. I know enough to know that you’ve been a-working agin Clarence, and I suspicions you ha’n’t done working agin him. Now, this is to let you onderstand that Jack Bannister has nara an eye in his head that don’t watch for his friend and agin his enemy: and I tell you all in good natur’, and without meaning any malice, that, whatever harm you do to him, that same harm I’ll double and treble upon you, though I wait and watch, out in the worst weather, and walk on bloody stumps, to do it. I suspicions you, Edward Conway, and I give you fair warning, I’ll be at your heels, like a dog that never barks to let the world know which way he’s running.”

“A fair warning enough, Bannister,” replied the fugitive with recovered composure, and a moderate show of dignity. “To resent your language, at this time, would be almost as foolish as to endeavor to prove that your suspicions of me are groundless. I shall not feel myself less manly or less inuocent by forbearing to do either.”

“Well, that’s jest as you think proper, Edward Conway; I must ax your pardon agin for saying rough things to a man that’s a sort of prisoner, but I’m thinking it’s always the cleanest play to speak the truth when you’re forced to it. You’ve been talking at me ever sence the time I helped Clarence to git you into the swamp, as if I had been some old friend of your’n; and it went agin me to stand quiet and hear you all the time, and not set you right on that matter. Now, as the thing’s done, with your leave we’ll say no more about it. My orders from the colonel war to carry you out of the swamp; so you’ll make ready as soon as you can, for there’s precious little of daylight left for a mighty dark sort of navigation.

“And where is he—where do you take me?” demanded the fugitive.

“Well, it’s not in my orders to let you know any more than I’ve told you: only I may say you don’t go out exactly where you came in.”

“Enough, sir. I presume that my brother’s commands will insure me a safe guidance? I am ready to go with you.”

This was said with that air of resentment which amply proved to the woodman that his blunt freedoms had been sensibly felt. He smiled only at the distrust which the words of the fugitive seemed to betray, and the haughtiness of his manner appeared rather to awaken in the honest scout something of a pleasurable emotion.

“Well,” he muttered half aloud as he prepared to throw the boat off from her fastenings; “well, it’s not onreasonable that he should be angry. I don’t know but I should like him the better if he would throw off his coat and back all his sly doings at the muzzle of the pistol. But I have no patience with anything that looks like a sneak. It’s bad enough to be dodging with an enemy, but to dodge when a friend’s looking arter you, is a sort of sport I consider mighty onbecoming in a white man. It’s nigger natur’, and don’t shame a black skin, but—well, you’re ready, Mr. Edward? Jest take your seat in the bottom, and keep stiddy. It’s a ticklish sort of navigation we’ve got before us, and our dug-out a’n’t much more heavier than a good-sized calabash. She’ll swim if we’re stiddy, but if you dodge about we’ll spile our leggins, and mought be, have to swim for it. Stiddy, so. Are you right, sir?”

“Steady—all right!” was the calm, low response of the fugitive, as the canoe darted through the lagune.

CHAPTER IV.

THE KINSMEN.

THE boat, under the adroit management of Supple Jack, soon reached the shore where Clarence Conway awaited them. Standing side by side, there was little obvious difference between the persons of the kinsmen. They were both equally tall, strongly made and symmetrical—each had the same general cast of countenance—the hair was not unlike; the complexion of Edward was darker than that of Clarence. The difference between them, physically, if not so obvious, was yet singularly marked and substantial. There was that in the expression of their several faces, which, to the nice physiognomical critic, did not inaptly illustrate the vital differences in the two characters as they will be found to display themselves in the progress of this narrative. The forehead and chin of the former were much smaller than those of the younger. The cheek-bones were higher; the lips, which in Clarence Conway were usually compressed, giving an air of decision to his mouth which approached severity, were, in the case of Edward, parted into smiles, which were only too readily and too easily evoked, not, sometimes, to awaken doubts of their sincerity in the mind of the spectator. Some well-defined lines about the upper lip and corners of the mouth, which signified cares and anxieties, tended still more to make doubtful the prompt smile of the wearer. The difference of five years—for that period of time lay between their several ages—had added a few wrinkles to the cheeks and brow of the elder, which nowhere appeared upon the face of the younger. A conscience free from reproach, had probably saved him from tokens which are quite as frequently the proofs of an ill-ordered life as of age and suffering. Some other leading differences between the two might be traced out by a close observer, and not the least prominent of these exhibited itself at the moment of

their present meeting, in the over-acted kindness and extreme courtesy of the fugitive kinsman. His sweet soft tones of conciliation, his studied gentleness of accent, and the extreme humility of his gesture—all appeared in large contrast with the simple, unaffected demeanor of the younger. The feelings of Clarence were all too earnest for mannerism of any sort; and, motioning Jack Bannister aside, he met his half-brother with an air full of direct purpose, and a keenly-awakened consciousness of the dark doubts renewed in his mind upon that mystery which rose up like a wall between them.

It was difficult to say, while Edward Conway was approaching him, whether sorrow or anger predominated in his countenance. But the face of the fugitive beamed with smiles, and his hand was extended. The hand remained untaken, however, and the eye of the elder brother shrunk from the encounter with the searching glance of Clarence. A slight suffusion passed over his cheek, and there was a tremor in his voice as he spoke, which might be natural to the resentment which he must have felt, but which he showed no other disposition to declare.

“So cold to me, Clarence? What now should awaken your displeasure? You have behaved nobly in this business—do not send me from you in anger!”

“I have behaved only as a brother, Edward Conway. Would that you could feel like one! You have again deceived me!” was the stern, accusing answer.

“Deceived you!” was the reply, and the eye of the speaker wandered from the strong glance of his kinsman, and his lips whitened as he spoke; “how, Clarence—how have I deceived you?”

“But this day you assured me, on your honor, that you had not sought Flora Middleton since my last conference with you on the subject. I now know that you have been at Brier Park within the last three weeks.”

The practised cunning of the worlding came to the relief of the accused, and Edward Conway availed himself of one of those petty evasions to which none but the mean spirit is ever willing to resort.

“Very true, Clarence; but I did not *seek* Flora in going there.

I happened to be in the neighborhood at nightfall, and saw no good reason for avoiding a good supper and a comfortable bed, which I knew the hospitalities of Brier Park would always afford me. I *did* go there—that is true—saw Flora and all the family—but it is nevertheless equally true, that in going there I did not *seek* her.”

“But you withheld the fact of your being there, Edward Conway, and left the impression on my mind that you had not seen her.”

“I did not seek to convey such an impression, Clarence; I simply spoke to the point, and spoke with literal exactitude.”

“You have a legal proficiency in language,” was the sarcastic comment. “But for this I should probably have heard the whole truth. What good reason was there why you should be so partial in your revelations? Why did you not tell me all?”

“To answer you frankly, Clarence,” replied the other, with the air of a man unbuttoning his bosom to the examination of the world—“I found you jealous and suspicious on this subject—in just the mood to convert the least important circumstance into a cause of doubt and dissatisfaction; and, therefore, I withheld from you a fact which, however innocent in itself, and unworthy of consideration, I was yet well aware, in your mood of mind, would assume an importance and character which justly it could not merit. Besides, Clarence, there were so many subjects of far more interest to *my* mind, of which we had no speech, that I did not care to dwell upon the matter longer than was necessary. You forget, Clarence, that I had not seen you for months before this meeting.”

The suspicions of the younger were in no respect disarmed or lessened by this explanation. Edward Conway had somewhat overshot his mark when he spoke so slightly of a subject to which Clarence attached so high an importance. The latter could not believe in the indifference which the other expressed in reference to one so dear to himself as Flora Middleton; and, in due degree as he felt the probability that so much merit as he esteemed that maiden to possess, could not fail to awaken the tender passion in all who beheld her, so was he now inclined to consider the declaration of his kinsman as an hypocrisy equally

gross and shallow. He resolved, internally, that he should neither deceive his judgment nor disarm his watchfulness; that, while he himself forbore reproaches of every sort, which, indeed, at that moment, would have seemed ungenerous and ungracious, he would endeavor to maintain a *surveillance* over his rival's movements, which would at least defeat such of his machinations as might otherwise tend to beguile from himself the affections of the beloved object. The closing words of Edward Conway suggested a natural change of the subject, of which Clarence quickly availed himself.

"You remind me, Edward Conway, that, though we have spoken of various and interesting subjects, you have not yet given me the information which I sought, on any. The one most important to both of us, Edward Conway—to our father's family, to the name we bear, and the position we should equally sustain, as well to the past as to the future, in the eye of our country—is that of your present public course. On that subject you have told me nothing. Of your position in this conflict I know nothing; and what little reaches my ears from the lips of others, is painfully unfavorable. Nay, more, Edward Conway, I am constrained to think, and I say it in bitterness and sadness, that what you have said, in reply to my frequent and earnest inquiries on this point, has seemed to me intended rather to evade than to answer my demands. I can not divest myself of the conviction that you have spoken on this subject with as careful a suppression of the whole truth, as this morning when you gave me the assurance with regard to Flora Middleton."

A heavy cloud darkened, though for a moment only, the face of the elder Conway.

"There are some very strong prejudices against me in your mind, Clarence, or it would not be difficult for you to understand how I might very naturally have secrets which should not be revealed, and yet be engaged in no practices which would either hurt my own, or the honor of my family."

"This I do not deny, Edward, however suspicious it may seem that such secrets should be withheld from an only brother, whose faith you have never yet found reason to suspect; whose

prudence you have never found occasion to distrust. But I do not ask for any of your secrets. I should scorn myself for ever did I feel a single desire to know that which you have any good reason to withhold from me. It is only that I may defend you from injustice—from slander—from the suspicions of the true and the worthy—that I would be fortified by a just knowledge of your objects and pursuits. Surely, there can be no good reason to withhold this knowledge, if what you do is sanctioned by propriety and the cause for which we are all in arms."

"It is sanctioned by the cause for which we are in arms," replied the other, hastily. "Have I not assured you that I am no traitor—that my fidelity to my country is not less pure and perfect than your own? The slanderer will defame and the credulous will believe, let us labor as we may. I take no heed of these—I waste no thought on such profitless matters; and you, Clarence, will save yourself much pain, and me much annoying conjecture, if you will resolve to scorn their consideration with myself, and cast them from your mind. Give them no concern. Believe me to be strangely and awkwardly placed; but not criminal—not wilfully and perversely bent on evil. Is not this enough? What more shall I say? Would you have me—your elder brother—bearing the same name with yourself—declare to you, in words, that I am not the black-hearted, blood-thirsty, reckless monster, which these wide-mouthed creatures, these blind mouths and bitter enemies, proclaim me?"

"But why are these men of Butler *your* enemies? They are not the enemies of your country."

"I know not that," said the other hastily.

"Your doubt does them gross injustice," replied Clarence Conway, with increased earnestness; "they are known men—tried and true—and whatever may be their excesses and violence, these are owing entirely to the monstrous provocation they have received. How can it be, Edward, that you have roused these men to such a degree of hostility against yourself? They bear to you no ordinary hate—they speak of you in no ordinary language of denunciation—"

"My dear Clarence," said the other, "you seem to forget all the while, that they never spoke of me at all—certainly not by

name. They know me not—they have most assuredly confounded me with another. Even if I were indeed the person whom they hate, to answer your questions would be no easy matter. As well might I undertake to show why there are crime and injustice in the world, as why there are slander and suspicion. These are plants that will grow, like joint-grass, in every soil, weed and work at them as you may."

"It is nevertheless exceedingly strange, Edward," was the musing answer of the still unsatisfied Clarence; "it is strange how any set of men should make such a mistake."

"The strangest thing of all is, that my own brother should think it so. Why should you?"

"Should I not?"

"Wherefore?—You can not believe that I am, indeed, what they allege me to be—the chief of the Black Riders—that dreaded monster—half-man, half-dragon—who slays the men swallows the children, and flies off with the damsels. Ha! ha na! Really, Clarence, I am afraid you are as credulous now at twenty-five as you were at five."

"It is not *that* I believe, Edward Conway. If I did, the name of my father, which you bear, had not saved your life. But, why, again, are you suspected? Suspicion follows no actions that are not doubtful—it dogs no footsteps which are straightforward—it haunts no character, the course of which has been direct and unequivocal? My unhappiness is that you have made yourself liable to be confounded with the criminal, because you have not been seen with the innocent. You are not with us, and the natural presumption is that you are with our enemies."

"I should not care much for the idle gabble of these country geese, Clarence, but that you should echo their slanders—that you should join in the hiss!"

This was spoken with the air of mortified pride, such as might be supposed the natural emotion of every honorable spirit, assailed by the doubts of friend or kinsman.

"I do not—all I demand of you is that confidence which would enable me to silence it."

"As well attempt to silence the storm. The attempt would

be idle; and, if made, where should we begin? What suspicion must I first dissipate? Whose poisonous breath must I first encounter? This story of the Black Riders, for example—do you really believe, Clarence, in the alleged existence of this banditti?"

"I do!—I can not believe otherwise."

"Impossible! I doubt it wholly. These dastardly fellows of Butler have fancied half the terrors they describe. Their fears have magnified their foes, and I make no question they have slandered as civil a set of enemies as ever had a professional sanction for throat-cutting. Really, Clarence, the very extravagance of these stories should save you from belief; and I must say, if you do believe, that a little more of the brotherly love which you profess, should keep you from supposing me to be the savage monster of whom they give such horrid traits in the chief of this Black banditti. My very appearance—in our youth, Clarence, considered not very much unlike your own—should save me from these suspicions. See!—my skin is rather fair than dark; and as for the mass of hair which is said to decorate the chin, and the black shock which surrounds the face of the formidable outlaw—none who looks at my visage will fancy that Esau could ever claim me for his kinsman. My vanity, indeed, is quite as much touched as my honor, Clarence, that my smooth visage should suffer such cruel misrepresentation."

And as the speaker concluded this rhapsody, his eye suddenly wandered from that of the person he addressed, and rested upon the belt which encircled his own body—a belt of plain black leather, secured by an ordinary iron buckle, painted of the same color, and freshly varnished. An uneasy upward glance, at this moment, encountered that of his kinsman, whose eyes had evidently followed his own, to the examination of the same object. In this single glance and instant, it seemed that the moral chasm which had always existed between their souls, had yawned wider and spread farther than before. There was a mutual instinct where there was no mutual sympathy. The disquiet of the one and the doubts of the other, were reawakened; and though neither spoke, yet both understood the sudden difficulties of further

speech between them. Another voice, at this moment, broke the silence, which it did not however relieve of any of that painful pressure which the interview possessed over both the interested parties. The impatience of the worthy woodman had brought him sufficiently nigh to hear some of the last words of the elder kinsman.

“ Well,” said he, bluntly, “ if long talking can make any case cl’ar, then it’s pretty sartin, Edward Conway, that they’ve mightily belied you. What you say is very true about skin, and face, and complexion, and all that. Naterally, you ha’n’t no great deal of beard, and your shock, as it stands, wouldn’t be a sarcumstance alongside of the colonel’s or my own. But I’ve hearn of contrivances to help natur in sich a matter. I’ve hearn of livin’ men, and livin’ women too, that dressed themselves up in the sculps of dead persons, and made a mighty pretty figger of hair for themselves, when, naterally they had none. Now, they do say, that the Black Riders does the same thing. Nobody that I’ve ever hearn speak of them, ever said that the sculps was nateral that they had on; and the beards, too, would come and go, jist according to the company they want to keep. It’s only a matter of ten days ago—the time you may remember, by a mighty ugly run you had of it from these same boys of Butler—that I was a-going over the same ground, when, what should I happen to see in the broad track but one of these same changeable sculps—the sculp for the head and the sculp for the chin, and another sculp that don’t look altogether so nateral, that must ha’ gone somewhere about the mouth, though it must ha’ been mighty onpleasant, a-tickling of the nostrils; for you see, if I knows anything of human natur, or beast natur, this sculp come, at first, from the upper side of a five year old fox-squirrel, one of the rankest in all the Santee country. I knew by the feel somewhat, and a little more by the smell. Now, Mr. Edward Conway, if you’ll jist look at these here fixin’s, you won’t find it so hard to believe that a fair-skinned man mout wear a black sculp and a mighty dark complexion onderneath, if so be the notion takes him. Seein’s believing. I used to think, before we went out, that it was all an ole woman’s story, bnt as sure as a gun, I found these sarcumstances, jist as you

see 'em, on the broad path down to the Waterce; and I reckon that's a strong sarcumstance, by itself, to make me think they was made for something, and for somebody to wear. But that's only my notion. I reckon it's easy enough, in sich times as these, for every man to find a different way of thinking when he likes to."

The articles described by the woodman were drawn from his bosom as he spoke, and displayed before the kinsmen. The keen eyes of Clarence, now doubly sharpened by suspicion, seemed disposed to pierce into the very soul of Edward Conway. He, however, withstood the analysis with all the calm fortitude of a martyr. He examined the several articles with the manner of one to whom they were entirely new and strange; and when he had done, quietly remarked to the deliberate woodman, that he had certainly produced sufficient evidence to satisfy him, if indeed he were not satisfied before, "that a man, disposed to adopt a plan of concealment and disguise, could readily find, or make, the materials to do so."

"But this, Clarence," said he, turning to his kinsman, "this has nothing to do with what I was saying of myself. It does not impair the assurance which I made you—"

Clarence Conway, who had been closely examining the articles, without heeding his brother, demanded of the woodman why he had not shown them to him before.

"Well, colonel, you see I didn't find them until the second day after the chase, when you sent me up, to scout along the hills."

"Enough!—Bring up the horses."

"Both?" asked the woodman, with some anxiety.

"Yes! I will ride a little way with my brother."

The horses were brought in a few moments from the mouth of a gorge which ran between the hills at the foot of which they stood. The promptness of the woodman's movements prevented much conversation, meanwhile, between the kinsmen; nor did either of them appear to desire it. The soul of Clarence was full of a new source of disquiet and dread; while the apprehensions of Edward Conway, if entirely of another sort, were yet too active to permit of his very ready speech. As the kins

men were preparing to mount, Supple Jack interposed, and drew his superior aside.

“Well, what’s the matter now?” demanded Clarence impatiently. “Speak quickly, Jack—the storm is at hand—the rain is already falling.”

“Yes, and that’s another reason for your taking to the swamp ag’in. In three hours the hills will tell a story of every step that your horse is taking”

“Well, what of that?”

“Why, matter enough, if the tories are on the look out for us, which I’m dub’ous is pretty much the case. I didn’t altogether like the signs I fell in with on the last scout, and if so be that Edward Conway is one of these Black Riders, then it’s good reason to believe they’ll be looking after him in the place where they lost him.”

“Pshaw, no more of this,” said the other angrily.

“Well, Clarence, you may ‘pshaw’ it to me as much as you please, only I’m mighty sartain, in your secret heart, you don’t ‘pshaw’ it to yourself. It’s a strange business enough, and it’s not onreasonable in me to think so—seeing what I have seen, and knowing what I know. Now that Butler’s boys are gone upward, these fellows will swarm thick as grasshoppers in all this country; and it’s my notion, if you will go, that you should keep a sharp eye in your head, and let your dogs bark at the first wink of danger. I’m dub’ous you’re running a mighty great risk on this side of the Wateree. There’s no telling where Marion is jist at this time; and there’s a rumor that Watson’s on the road to jine Rawdon. Some say that Rawdon’s going to leave Camden, and call in his people from Ninety-Six and Augusta; and if so, this is the very pairt of the country where there’s the best chance of meeting him and all of them. I wouldn’t ride far, Clarence; and I’d ride fast; and I’d git back as soon as horseflesh could bring me. Sorrel is in full blood now, and he’ll show the cleanest heels in the country, at the civillest axing of the spur.”

“You are getting as timid, Jack, as you are suspicious,” said the youth kindly, and with an effort at composure, which was not successful. “Age is coming upon you, and I fear, before

the campaign is over, you'll be expecting to be counted among the non-combatants. Don't apprehend for me, Jack; I will return before midnight. Keep up your scout, and get a stouter heart at work—you couldn't have a better one."

"That's to say, Clarry, that I'm a durn'd good-natered fool for my pains. I onderstands you—"

The rest was lost to the ears of Clarence Conway, in the rush of his own and the steed of his companion.

The worthy scout, however, continued the speech even after the departure of all hearers.

"But, fool or not, I'll look after you, as many a fool before has looked after a wiser man, and been in time to save him when he couldn't save himself. As for you, Ned Conway," he continued in brief soliloquy, and with a lifted finger, "you may draw your skairts over the eyes of Clarence, but it'll take thicker skairts than yourn to blind Jack Bannister. You couldn't do it altogether when we war boys together, and I'm a thinking—it'll be a mighty onbecoming thing to me, now that I'm a man, if I should let you be any more successful. Well, here we stand. The thing's to be done; the game's to be played out; and the stakes, Ned Conway, must be my head agin yourn. The game's a fair one enough, and the head deserves to lose it, that can't keep its place on the shoulders where God put it."

With this conclusive philosophy, the scout tightened his belt about his waist, threw up his rifle, the flint and priming of which he carefully examined, then, disappeared for a brief space among the stunted bushes that grew beside the swamp thicket. He emerged soon after, leading a stout Cherokee pony, which had been contentedly ruminating among the cane-tops. Mounting this animal, which was active and sure-footed, he set off in a smart canter upon the track pursued by his late companions, just as the rainstorm, which had been for some time threatening, began to discharge the hoarded torrents of several weeks upon the parched and thirsting earth.

CHAPTER V.

THE BLACK RIDERS OF CONGAREE.

WHILE the kinsmen were about to leave the banks of the Wateree, for the Santee hills beyond, there were other parties among those hills, but a few miles distant, preparing to move down, on the same road, toward the Wateree. The eye of the skulking woodman may have seen, toward nightfall, a motley and strange group of horsemen, some sixty or seventy in number, winding slowly down the narrow gorges, with a degree of cautious watchfulness, sufficient to make them objects of suspicion, even if the times were not of themselves enough to render all things so. The unwonted costume of these horsemen was equally strange and calculated to inspire apprehension. They were dressed in complete black—each carried broadsword and pistols, and all the usual equipments of the well-mounted dragoon. The belt around the waist, the cap which hung loosely upon the brow; the gloves, the sash—all were distinguished by the same gloomy aspect. Their horses alone, various in size and color, impaired the effect of this otherwise general uniformity. Silently they kept upon their way, like the shadows of some devoted band of the olden time, destined to reappear, and to reoccupy, at certain periods of the night, the scenes in which they fought and suffered. Their dark, bronzed visages, at a nearer approach, in nowise served to diminish the general severity of their appearance. Huge, bushy beards, hung from every chin, in masses almost weighty enough to rival the dense forests which are worn, as a matter of taste, at the present day, in the same region, by a more pacific people. The mustache ran luxuriant above the mouth, greatly cherished, it would seem, if not cultivated; for no attempt appeared to be made by the wearer, to trim and curl the pampered growth, after the fashion of Russians and Mussulmans. The imperial tuft below, like that which

decorates so appropriately the throat of the turkey, seemed designed, in the case of each of our sable riders, to emulate in length and dimensions, if not in fitness, that of the same pretentious bird. Some of these decorations were, doubtlessly, like those which became the spoil of our worthy woodman in a previous chapter, of artificial origin; but an equal number were due to the bounteous indulgence of Dame Nature herself. Of the troop in question, and their aspects, something more might be said. They had evidently, most of them, seen service in the "imminent deadly breach." Ugly scars were conspicuous on sundry faces, in spite of the extensive foliage of beard, which strove vainly to conceal them; and the practised ease of their horsemanship, the veteran coolness which marked their deliberate and watchful movements, sufficiently declared the habitual and well-appointed soldier.

Still, there was not so much of that air of military subordination among them which denotes the regular service. They were not what we call regulars—men reduced to the conditions of masses, and obeying, in mass, a single controlling will. They seemed to be men, to whom something of discipline was relaxed in consideration of other more valuable qualities of valor and forward enterprise, for which they might be esteemed. Though duly observant not to do anything which might yield advantage to an enemy, prowling in the neighborhood, still, this caution was not so much the result of respect for their leader, as the natural consequence of their own experience, and the individual conviction of each of what was due to the general safety. They were not altogether silent as they rode, and when they addressed their superiors, there was none of that nice and blind deference upon which military etiquette, among all well-ordered bodies of men, so imperatively insists. The quip and crack were freely indulged in—the ribald jest was freely spoken; and, if the ribald song remained unsung, it was simply because of a becoming apprehension that its melodies might reach other ears than their own.

Their leader, if he might be so considered, to whom they turned for the small amount of guidance which they seemed to need, was scarcely one of the most attractive among their num-

ber. He was a short, thick set, dark-looking person, whose stern and inflexible features were never lightened unless by gleams of anger and ferocity. He rode at their head, heard in silence the most that was said by those immediately about him, and if he gave any reply, it was uttered usually in a cold, conclusive monosyllable. His dark eye was turned as frequently upward to the lowering skies as along the path he travelled. Sometimes he looked back upon his troop—and occasionally halted at the foot of the hill till the last of his band had appeared in sight above. His disposition to taciturnity was not offensive to those to whom he permitted a free use of that speech in which he did not himself indulge; and, without heeding his phlegm, his free companions went on without any other restraint than arose from their own sense of what was due to caution in an enemy's country.

Beside the leader, at moments, rode one who seemed to be something of a favorite with him, and who did not scruple, at all times to challenge the attention of his superior. He was one—perhaps the very youngest of the party—whose quick, active movements, keen eyes, and glib utterance, declared him to belong to the class of subtler spirits who delight to manage the more direct, plodding, and less ready of their race. It is not improbable that he possessed some such influence over the person whom we have briefly described, of which the latter was himself totally unconscious. Nothing in the deportment of the former would have challenged a suspicion of this sort. Though he spoke freely and familiarly, yet his manner, if anything, was much more respectful than that generally of his companions. This man was evidently a close observer, as even his most careless remarks fully proved; and the glances of disquiet which the leader cast about him, at moments, as he rode, did not escape his notice. Upon these he did not directly comment. His policy, of course, did not suffer him so greatly to blunder as to assume that a lieutenant, or captain, of dragoons could be disquieted by any thing. When he spoke, therefore, even when his purpose was counsel or suggestion, he was careful that his language should not indicate his real purpose. We take up the dialogue between the parties at a moment, when, pausing at the

bottom of one hill, and about to commence the ascent of another, the leader of the squad cast a long thoughtful glance skyward, and dubiously, but unconsciously, shook his head at the survey.

"We are like to have the storm on our backs, lieutenant, before we can get to a place of shelter; and I'm thinking if we don't look out for quarters before it comes down in real earnest, there'll be small chance of our finding our way afterward. The night will be here in two hours and a mighty dark one it will be, I'm thinking."

The lieutenant again looked forward, and upward, and around him, and a slight grunt, which was half a sigh, seemed to acknowledge the truth of the other's observations.

"I doubt," continued the first speaker, "if our drive to-day will be any more lucky than before. I'm afraid it's all over with the captain."

Another grunt in the affirmative; and the subordinate proceeded with something more of confidence.

"But there's no need that we should keep up the hunt in such a storm as is coming on. Indeed, there's but little chance of finding anybody abroad but ourselves in such weather. I'm thinking, lieutenant, that it wouldn't be a bad notion to turn our heads and canter off to old Muggs's at once."

"Old Muggs! why how far d'ye think he's off?"

"Not three miles, as I reckon. We've gone about seven from Cantey's, he's only eight to the right, and if we take a short cut that lies somewhere in this quarter—I reckon I can find it soon—we'll be there in a short half hour."

"Well! you're right—we'll ride to Muggs's. There's no use keeping up this cursed hunt and no fun in it."

"Yes, and I reckon we can soon make up our minds to get another captain."

A smirk of the lips, which accompanied this sentence, was intended to convey no unpleasant signification to the ears of his superior

"How, Darcy—how is it—have you sounded them? What do they say now?" demanded the latter with sudden earnestness

“Well, lieutenant, I reckon we can manage it pretty much as we please. That’s my notion.”

“You think so? Some of them have a strange liking for Morton.”

“Yes, but not many, and they can be cured of that.”

“Enough, then, till we get to Muggs’s. Then we can talk it over. But beware of what you say to *him*. Muggs is no friend of mine, you know.”

“Nor is he likely to be, so long as he wears that scar on his face in token that your hand is as heavy as your temper is passionate. He remembers that blow!”

“It isn’t that, altogether,” replied the other; “but the truth is, that we English are no favorites here, even among the most loyal of this people. There’s a leaning to their own folks, that always gets them the preference when we oppose them; and old Muggs has never been slow to show us that he has no love to spare for any king’s man across the water. I only wonder, knowing their dislikes as I do, that there’s a single loyalist in the colony. These fellows that ride behind us, merciless as they have ever shown themselves in a conflict with the rebels, yet there’s not one of them who, in a pitched battle between one of us and one of them, wouldn’t be more apt to halloo for him than for us. Nothing, indeed, has secured them to the king’s side but the foolish violence of the rebels, which wouldn’t suffer the thing to work its own way; and began tarring and feathering and flogging at the beginning of the squabble. Had they left it to time, there wouldn’t have been one old Muggs from Cape Fear to St. Catharine’s. We shouldn’t have had such a troop as that which follows us now; nor would I, this day, be hunting, as lieutenant of dragoons, after a leader, who—”

“Whom we shall not find in a hurry, and whom we no longer need,” said the subordinate, concluding the sentence which the other had partly suppressed.

“Policy! policy!” exclaimed the lieutenant. “That was Rawdon’s pretext for refusing me the commission, and conferring it upon Morton. He belonged to some great family on the Congaree, and must have it therefore; but, now, he can scarcely refuse it, if it be as we suspect. If Morton be laid by the heels,

even as a prisoner, he is dead to us. The rebels will never suffer him to live if they have taken him."

"No, indeed," replied the other; "he hasn't the first chance. And that they *have* taken him, there is little doubt on my mind."

"Nor on mine. What follows if the men agree?"

"What should follow? The friends of Morton can say nothing. The command naturally falls into your hands without a word said."

"I'm not so sure of that, either. There's some of them that don't care much about Morton, yet don't like me."

"Perhaps! But, what of that? The number's not many, and we can put them down, if it comes to any open opposition. But we'll see to that this very night, when we get to Muggs's."

"For Muggs's, then, with all the speed we may. Take the lead, yourself, Darcy, and see after this short cut. You know the country better than I. We must use spur, if we would escape the storm. These drops are growing bigger, and falling faster, every moment. Go ahead, while I hurry the fellows forward at a canter; and even that will barely enable us to save our distance."

"It matters little for the wetting, lieutenant, when we remember what's to follow it. Promotion that comes by water is not by any means the worse for the wetting. The shine gets dim upon the epaulettes; but they are epaulettes, all the same. There's the profit, lieutenant—the profit!"

"Ay, the profit! Yes, that will reconcile us to worse weather than this; but—"

The sentence was left unfinished, while the subordinate rode ahead and out of hearing. The lieutenant signalled his men, as they slowly wound down the hill, to quicken pace; and while he watched their movements, his secret thoughts had vented in a low soliloquy.

"True! the event will reconcile us to the weather. The prize is precious. Power is always precious. But here the prize is something more than power; it is safety—it is freedom. If Morton is laid by the heels for ever, I am safe. I escape my danger—my terror—the presence which I hate and fear! I do not deceive myself, though I may blind these. Edward

Morton was one in whose presence I shrunk to less than my full proportions. That single act—that act of shame and baseness—made me his slave. He alone, knows the guilt and the meanness of that wretched moment of my life. God! what would I not give to have that memory obliterated in him who did, and him who beheld, the deed of that moment. I feel my heart tremble at his approach,—my muscles wither beneath his glance; and I, who fear not the foe, and shrink not from the danger, and whom men call brave—brave to desperation—I dare not lift my eyes to the encounter with those of another having limbs and a person neither stronger nor nobler than my own. He down, and his lips for ever closed, and I am free. I can then breathe in confidence, and look around me without dreading the glances of another eye. But, even should he live—should he have escaped this danger—why should I continue to draw my breath in fear, when a single stroke may make my safety certain—may rid me of every doubt—every apprehension? It must be so. Edward Morton, it is sworn. In your life my shame lives, and while your lips have power of speech, I am no moment safe from dishonor. Your doom is written, surely and soon, if it be not already executed.”

These words were only so many indistinct mutterings, inaudible to those who followed him. He commanded them to approach, quickened their speed, and the whole troop, following his example, set off on a smart canter in the track which Darcy had taken. Meanwhile, the storm, which before had only threatened, began to pour down its torrents, and ere they reached the promised shelter at Muggs’s—a rude cabin of pine logs, to which all direct approach was impossible, and which none but an initiate could have found, so closely was it buried among the dense groves that skirted the river swamp, and may have formed a portion of its primitive domain. Here the party came to a full halt, but the object at which they aimed appeared to be less their own than their horses and equipments. These were conducted into yet deeper recesses, where, in close woods and shrubbery, in which art had slightly assisted nature, they were so bestowed as to suffer only slightly from the storm. The greater portion of the troop took shelter in the cabin of

Muggs, while a small squad still kept in motion around the neighborhood, heedless of the weather, and quite as watchful from long habit, as if totally unconscious of any annoyances.

The establishment of Muggs was one, in fact, belonging to the party. The host himself was a retired trooper, whom a wound in the right arm had so disabled that amputation became necessary. Useless to the troop in actual conflict, he was yet not without his uses in the position which he held, and the new duties he had undertaken. He was a blunt, fearless old soldier, a native of the neighborhood, who, being maimed, was tolerated by the whigs as no longer capable of harm; and suffered to remain in a region in which it was thought, even if disposed to do mischief, his opportunities were too few to make his doings of very serious importance. He sold strong liquors, also—did not villanously dilute his beverages—and, as he made no distinction between his customers, and provided whigs and tories at the same prices, there was no good reason to expel him from his present position by way of punishing him for a course of conduct in which so heavy a penalty seemed already to have been attached. He was prudent enough—though he did not withhold his opinions—to express them without warmth or venom; and, as it was well known to the patriots that he had never been a savage or blood-thirsty enemy, there was a very general disposition among them to grant him every indulgence. Perhaps, however, all these reasons would have been unavailing in his behalf, at the sanguinary period of which we write, but for the excellence of his liquors, and the certainty of his supply. His relations with the British enabled him always to provide himself at Charleston, and every public convoy replenished his private stores. It should be also understood that none of the whigs, at any moment, suspected the worthy landlord of a previous or present connection with a band so odious as that of the Black Riders. The appearance of these desperadoes was only a signal to Muggs to take additional precautions. As we have already stated, a portion of the band was sent out to patrol the surrounding country; and the number thus despatched, on the present occasion, was, by the earnest entreaty of the host, made twice as large as the lieutenant thought there was any occasion

for. But the former insisted, with characteristic stubbornness, and with a degree of sullenness in his manner which was foreign to his usual custom.

“I’m not over-pleased to see you here at all, this time, lieutenant, though I reckon you’ve a good reason enough for coming. There’s a sharp stir among the rebels all along the Wateree, and down on the Santee, there’s no telling you how far. As for the Congarees, it’s a-swarm thar’, in spite of all Bill Cunningham can do, and he’s twice as spry as ever. Here, only two days ago, has been that creeping critter, Supple Jack; that come in, as I may say, over my shoulder, like the old Satan himself. At first I did think it was the old Satan, till he laughed at my scare, and then I know’d him by his laugh. Now, it’s not so easy to cheat Supple Jack, and he knows all about your last coming. He’s willing to befriend me, though he gin me fair warning, last time he was here, that I was suspicioned for loving you too well. Now, split my cedars, men, I’ve got mighty little reason to love you—you know that—and I’m thinking, for your sake and mine both, the sooner you draw spur for the mountains, the smoother will be the skin you keep. I don’t want to see the ugly face of one of you for a month of Sundays.”

“Why, Muggs—old Muggs—getting scared in the very beginning of the season! How’s this?—what’s come over you?” was the demand of half a dozen.

“I’ve reason to be scared, when I know that hemp’s growing for every man that’s keeping bad company. Such raps callions as you, if you come too often, would break up the best ‘mug’ in the country.”

The landlord’s pun was innocent enough, and seemed an old one. It awakened no more smile on his lips than upon those of his guests. It was spoken in serious earnest. He continued to belabor them with half playful abuse, mingled with not a few well-intended reproaches, while providing, with true landlord consideration, for their several demands. The Jamaica run was put in frequent requisition—a choice supply of lemons was produced from a box beneath the floor, and the band was soon broken up into little groups that huddled about, each after its

own fashion, in the several corners of the wigwam. The rain meanwhile beat upon, and, in some places, through the roof—the rush of the wind, the weight of the torrent, and the general darkness of the scene, led naturally to a considerable relaxation even of that small degree of discipline which usually existed among the troop. Deep draughts were swallowed; loud talking ensued, frequent oaths, and occasionally a sharp dispute, qualified by an equally sharp snatch of a song from an opposite quarter, proved all parties to be at ease, and each busy to his own satisfaction.

The lieutenant of the troop, whom we have just seen acting in command, was perhaps the least satisfied of any of the party. Not that he had less in possession, but that he had more in hope. He suffered the jibe and the song to pass; the oath roused him not, nor did he seem to hear the thousand and one petty disputes that gave excitement to the scene. He seemed disposed—and this may have been a part of his policy—to release his men from all the restraints, few though they were, which belonged to his command. But his policy was incomplete. It was not enough that he should confer licentious privileges upon his followers—to secure their sympathies, he should have made himself one of them. He should have given himself portion of that license which he had accorded to them. But he was too much of the Englishman for that. He could not divest himself of that haughty bearing which was so habitual in the carriage of the Englishman in all his dealings with the provincial, and which, we suspect, was, though undeclared, one of the most active influences to provoke the high-spirited people of the south to that violent severing of their connection with the mother-country, which was scarcely so necessary in their case as in that of the northern colonies.

Our lieutenant—whose name was Stockton—it is true, made sundry, but not very successful efforts, to blend himself with his comrades. He shared their draughts, he sometimes yielded his ears where the dialogue seemed earnest—sometimes he spoke, and his words were sufficiently indulgent; but he lacked utterly that ease of carriage, that simplicity of manner, which alone could prove that his condescension was not the re-

sult of effort, and against the desires of his mind. His agent, Darcy, was more supple as he was more subtle. He was not deficient in those arts which, among the ignorant, will always secure the low. He drank with them, as if he could not well have drunk without them—threw himself among their ranks, as if he could not have disposed his limbs easily anywhere else; and did for his superior what the latter could never have done for himself. He operated sufficiently on the minds of several to secure a faction in his favor, and thus strengthened, he availed himself of the moment when the Jamaica had proved some portion of its potency, to broach openly the subject which had hitherto been only discussed in private.

Of the entreaties, the arguments, or the promises made by Ensign Darcy to persuade the troop into his way of thinking, we shall say nothing. It will be sufficient for our purpose that we show the condition of things at this particular juncture. Considerable progress had now been made with the subject. It had, in fact, become the one subject of discussion. The person whom it more immediately concerned, had, prudently, if not modestly, withdrawn himself from the apartment, though in doing so, he necessarily exposed himself to some encounter with the pitiless storm. The various groups had mingled themselves into one. The different smaller topics which before excited them, had given way before the magnitude of this, and each trooper began to feel his increased importance as his voice seemed necessary in the creation of so great a personage as his captain.

So far, Darcy had no reason to be dissatisfied with his performances. Assisted by the Jamaica, his arguments had sunk deep into their souls. One after another had become a convert to his views, and he was just about to flatter himself with the conviction that he should soon be rejoiced by the unanimous shout which should declare the nomination of their new captain, when another party, who before had said not a single word, now joined in the discussion after a manner of his own. This was no less important a personage than Muggs, the landlord.

“Counting sculps before you take 'em! I wonder where the dickens you was brought up, Ensign Darcy. Here now you're for making a new cappin, afore you know what's come of the

old You reckon Ned Morton's dead, do you? I reckon he's alive and kicking. I don't *say* so, mind me. I wouldn't swear sich a thing on Scripture book, but I'm so nigh sure of it, that I'd be willing to swear never agin to touch a drop of the stuff if so be he is not alive."

"But, Muggs—if he's alive, where is he?"

Gog's wounds! that's easier asked than answered; but if we go to count for dead every chap that's missing, I'd have to go in mourning mighty often for the whole troop of you, my chickens. It's more reasonable that he's alive jist because we don't hear of him. We'd ha' hearn of him soon enough if the rebels had a got him. We'd ha' seen his hide upon a drum-head, and his own head upon a stump, and there wouldn't ha' been a dark corner on the Wateree that wouldn't ha' been ringing with the uproar about it. I tell you, my lads, that day that sees the death of Ned Morton, won't be a quiet day in these parts. There'll be more of a storm in these woods than is galloping through 'em now. If you don't cry that day, the rebels will; and let them lose what they may in the skrimmage, they'll have a gain when they flatten him on his baek!"

"Ah, Muggs!" exclaimed Darcy, "I'm afraid you let your wishes blind you to the truth. I suppose you don't know that we got the captain's horse, and he all bloody?"

"Don't I know, and don't I think, for that very reason too, that he's safe and sound, and will soon be among you. You found his horse, but not him. The horse was bloody. Well! If the blood had been his, and vital blood, don't you think you'd ha' found the rider as well as the horse? But, perhaps, you didn't stay long enough for the hunt. Folks say you all rode well enough that day. But if the cappin was mortal hurt and you didn't find him, are you sure the rebels did? I'm a thinking, not, by no manner of means. For, if they'd ha' got him, wha: a hello-balloo we should have had. No, to my thinking, the cappin lost the horse a-purpose when he found he couldn't lose the rebels. The whole troop of Butler was upon him, swearing death agin him at every jump. Be sure now, Ned Morton left the critter to answer for him, and tuk to the swamp like a brown bear in September. I can't feel as if he was dead; and, if he

was, Ensign Darcy, I, for one, wouldn't help in making a cappin out of any but one that comes out of the airth. I'm for country born, if any."

"Well, Muggs, what objection do you find to the lieutenant?"

"He's not country born, I tell you."

"But he's a good officer—there's not a better in the country than Lieutenant Stockton."

"That mout be, and then, agin, it moun't. I'm a-thinking Ben Williams is about as good a man as you could choose for your cappin, if so be that Ned Morton's slipped his wind for sartin. I don't see Ben here to-night—at this present—but look at him when he comes in, and you'll say that's the man to be a cappin. He's a dragoon, now, among a thousand, and then, agin, he's country born."

"But, Muggs, I don't see that your argument goes for much. An American born is a king's man, and a British born is the same, and it's natural, when they're fighting on the same side, that a British born should have command just the same as the American."

"I don't see that it's natural, and I don't believe it. There's a mighty difference between 'em to my thinking. As for your king's men and British men, I'm one that wishes you had let us alone to fight it out among ourselves, rebel and loyal, jist as we stand. It was a sort of family quarrel, and would ha' been soon over, if you hadn't dipped a long spoon into our dish. They'd ha' licked us or we'd ha' licked them, and which ever way it went, we'd all ha' been quiet long afore this. But here you come, with your Irishmen, and your Yagers, your Scotchmen and your Jarmans, and you've made the matter worse without helping yourselves. For, where are yon? As you whar? No, by the powers! You say Rawdon's licked Greene. It's well enough to say so. But where's Greene and where's Rawdon? If you ain't hearn, I can tell you."

"Well?" from half a dozen. "Let's hear! The news! The news!"

"Well! It's not well—not well for you, at least; and the sooner you're gone from these parts the better. Rawdon that licked Greene is about to run from Greene that he licked. I

have it from Scrub Heriot—little Scrub, you know--that they've had secret council in Camden, and all's in a mist thar—the people half scared to death, for they say that they can't get bacon or beans, and Rawdon's going to vackyate, and sw'ars, if he has to do so, he'll make Camden sich a blaze that it'll light his way all down to Charleston. I'm a-looking out for the burst every night. That's not all. Thar's as fresh a gathering of the rebels along the Santee and Pedee under Marion, as if every fellow you had ever killed had got his sculp back agin, and was jest as ready to kick as ever. Well, Tom Taylor's brushing like a little breeze about Granby, and who but Sumter rides the road now from Ninety-Six to Augusta? Who but he? Cunningham darsn't show his teeth along the track for fear they'll be drawed through the back of his head. Well, if this is enough to make you feel scarey, ain't it enough to make Ned Morton keep close and hold in his breath till he find a clean country before him. Don't you think of making a new cappin till you're sartin what's come of the old; and if it's all over with him, then I say look out for another man among you that comes out of the nateral airth. Ben Williams for me, lads, before any other."

"Hurrah for Ben Williams!" was the maudlin cry of half a dozen. The lieutenant at this moment reappeared. His glance was frowningly fixed upon the landlord, in a way to convince Muggs that he had not remained uninformed as to the particular course which the latter had taken. But it was clearly not his policy to show his anger in any more decided manner, and the cudgels were taken up for him by Darcy, who, during the various long speeches of the landlord had contrived to maintain a running fire among the men. He plied punch and persuasion—strong argument and strong drink—with equal industry; and the generous tendencies of the party began everywhere to overflow. He felt his increasing strength, and proceeded to carry the attack into the enemy's country.

"The truth is, Muggs, you have a grudge at the lieutenant ever since you had that brush together. You can't so readily forget that ugly mark on your muzzle."

"Look you, Ensign Darcy, there's something in what you

say that a leetle turns upon my stomach; for you see it's not the truth. I have no more grudge agin Lieutenant Stockton than I have agin you. As for the mark you speak of, I do say, it did him no great credit to make such a mark on a one-armed man; though I'd ha' paid him off with a side-wipe that would ha' made him 'spectful enough to the one I had left, if so be that Ben Williams hadn't put in to save him. That was the only onfriendly thing that Ben ever done to me to my knowing. No! I han't no grudges, thank God for all his blessings, but that's no reason why I shouldn't say what I do say, that Cappin Ned Morton's the man for my money; and, though I can't have much to say in the business, seeing I ain't no longer of the troop, yet if 'twas the last word I had to retickilate, I'd cry it for him. Here's to Ned Morton, boys, living or dead."

"And here's to Lieutenant Stockton, boys, and may he soon be captain of the Black Riders."

"Hurrah for Stockton! Hurrah!" was the now almost unanimous cry, and Stockton, advancing, was about to speak, when the faint sounds of a whistle broke upon the night, imparting a drearier accent to the melancholy sighing of the wind without. The note, again repeated, brought every trooper to his feet. The cups were set down hastily—swords buckled on—caps donned, and pistols examined.

"To horse!" was the command of Stockton, and his cool promptitude, shown on this occasion, was perhaps quite enough to justify the choice which the troop had been about to make of a new captain. "To horse!" he cried, leading the way to the entrance, but ere he reached it, the door was thrown wide, and the ambitious lieutenant recoiled in consternation, as he encountered, in the face of the new-comer, the stern visage of that very man, supposed to be dead, whom he equally feared and hated, and whose post he was so well disposed to fill. The chief of the Black Riders stood suddenly among his followers, and the shouts for the new commander were almost forgotten in those which welcomed the old. But let us retrace our steps for a few moments, and bring our readers once more within hearing of the kinsmen.

CHAPTER VI

FIRST FRUITS OF FREEDOM.

It is not important to our narrative, in returning to the place and period when and where we left the rival kinsmen, that we should repeat the arguments which the younger employed in order to persuade the other to a more open and manly course of conduct in his political career. These arguments could be of one character only. The style in which they were urged, however, became somewhat different, after the final interview which they had in the presence of the sturdy woodman. The display which Supple Jack had made of the disguises which he had found upon the very road over which Edward Conway had fled, and about the very time when he had taken shelter in the swamp from the pursuit of Butler's men, would, to any mind not absolutely anxious not to believe, have been conclusive of his guilt. Edward Conway felt it to be so in his own case, and readily concluded that Clarence would esteem it so. The few reflections, therefore, which time permitted him to make, were neither pleasant nor satisfactory; and when he galloped off with his younger brother, he had half a doubt whether the latter did not meditate his sudden execution, as soon as they should be fairly concealed from the sight of the woodman. He knew enough of the character of Clarence to know that he would as soon destroy his own brother for treachery—nay, sooner—than an open enemy; and the silence which he maintained, the stern, rigid expression of his features, and the reckless speed at which he seemed resolved to ride, contributed in no small degree to increase the apprehensions of the guilty man. For a brief space that ready wit and prompt subterfuge, which had enabled him hitherto to play a various and very complicated game in life, with singular adroitness and success, seemed about to fail

He felt his elasticity lessening fast—his confidence in himself declining; his brain was heavy, his tongue flattened and thick.

Besides, he was weaponless. There was no chance of success in any conflict, unless from his enemy's generosity; and upon that, in those days, the partisan who fought on either side made but few calculations. A club, the rudest mace, the roughest limb of the lithe hickory, became an object of desire to the mind of the conscious traitor at this moment. But he did not truly understand the nature of that mind and those principles, to which his own bore so little likeness. He little knew how strong and active were those doubts—the children of his wish—which were working in the bosom of Clarence Conway in his behalf.

At length the latter drew up his steed, and exhibited a disposition to stop. The rain, which by this time had become an incessant stream, had hitherto been almost unfelt by both the parties. The anxiety and sorrow of the one, and the apprehensions of the other, had rendered them equally insensible to the storm without.

“Edward Conway,” said the younger, “let us alight here. Here we must separate; and here I would speak to you, perhaps for the last time, as my father's son.”

Somewhat reassured, Edward Conway followed the example of his kinsman, and the two alighted among a group of hills, on the eastern side of which they found a partial protection from the storm, which was blowing from the west. But little did either need, at that moment, of shelter from its violence. Brief preparation sufficed to fasten their steeds beneath a close clump of foliage, and then followed the parting words of the younger, which had been so solemnly prefaced.

“Now, Edward Conway, my pledges to you are all fulfilled—my duties, too. I have done even more than was required at my hands by any of the ties of blood. I have been to you a brother, and you are now free.”

“You do not repent of it, Clarence?”

“Of that, it is fitting that I say nothing rashly. Time will show. But I need not say to you, Edward Conway, that the discovery of these disguises, under circumstances such as Jack Bannister detailed before you, has revived, in all their force, my

old suspicions. God knows how much I have striven to set my soul against these suspicions. God only knows how much I would give could I be sure that they were groundless. I dare not for my father's sake believe them—I dare not for my own. And this dread to believe, Edward Conway, is, I fear, the only thing that has saved, and still saves you, from my blow. But for this, kinsman or no kinsman, your blood had been as freely shed by these hands, as if its sluices were drawn from the least known and basest puddle in existence."

"I am at your mercy, Clarence Conway. I have no weapons. My arms are folded. I have already spoken when I should have been silent. I will say no more—nothing, certainly, to prevent your blow. Strike, if you will: if I can not convince you that I am true, I can at least show you that I am fearless."

The wily kinsman knew well the easy mode to disarm his brother—to puzzle his judgment, if not to subdue his suspicions.

"I have no such purpose!" exclaimed Clarence, chokingly. "Would to heaven you would give me no occasion to advert to the possibility that I ever should have. But hear me, Edward Conway, ere we part. Do not deceive yourself—do not fancy that I am deceived by this show of boldness. It did not need that you should assure me of your fearlessness. That I well knew. It is not your courage, but your candor, of which I am doubtful. The display of the one quality does not persuade me any the more of your possession of the other. We are now to part. You are free from this moment. You are also safe. Our men are no longer on the Wateree;—a few hours' good riding will bring you, most probably, within challenge of Watson's sentinels. If you are the foe to your country, which they declare you, he is your friend. That you do not seek safety in our ranks, I need no proof. But, ere we part, let me repeat my warnings. Believe me, Edward Conway, dear to me as my father's son, spare me, if you have it in your heart, the pain of being your foe. Spare me the necessity of strife with you. If it be that you are a loyalist, let us not meet. I implore it as the last favor which I shall ever ask at your hands; and I implore it with a full heart. You know that we have not always been friends. You know that there are circumstances, not in-

volving our principles, on which we have already quarrelled, and which are of a nature but too well calculated to bring into activity the wildest anger and the deadliest hate. But, however much we have been at strife—however I may have fancied that you have done me wrong—still, believe me, when I tell you that I have ever, in my cooler moments, striven to think of, and to serve you kindly. Henceforward our meeting must be on other terms. The cloud which hangs about your course—the suspicion which stains your character in the minds of others—have at last affected mine. We meet, hereafter, only as friends or foes. Your course must then be decided—your principles declared—your purpose known; and then, Edward Conway, if it be as men declare, and as I dare not yet believe, that you are that traitor to your country—that you do lead that savage banditti which has left the print of their horses' hoofs, wherever they have trodden, in blood—then must our meeting be one of blood only; and then, as surely as I shall feel all the shame of such a connection in my soul, shall I seek, by a strife without remorse, to atone equally to my father and to my country for the crime and folly of his son. Fondly do I implore you, Edward Conway, to spare me this trial. Let our parting at this moment be final, unless we are to meet on terms more satisfactory to both.”

The elder of the kinsmen, at this appeal, displayed more emotion, real or affected, than he had shown at any time during the interview. He strode to and fro among the tall trees, with hands clasped behind, eyes cast down upon the earth, and brows contracted. A single quiver might have been seen at moments among the muscles of his mouth. Neither of them seemed to heed the increasing weight of the tempest. Its roar was unheard—its torrents fell without notice around and upon them. The reply of Edward Conway was at length spoken. He approached his brother. He had subdued his emotions, whatever might have been their source. His words were few—his utterance composed and calm. He extended his hand to Clarence as he spoke.

“Let us part, Clarence. It does not become me to make further assurances. To reply, as I should, to what you have said,

might be, probably to increase the width and depth of that chasm which seems to lie between us. I can not say that I am satisfied with your tone, your temper, the position which you assume, and the right which you claim to direct, and warn, and counsel!—and when you threaten!—But enough! Let us part before anything be said which shall make you forget anything which you should remember, or me that I owe my life to your assistance. What is said is said—let it be forgotten. Let us part.”

“Ay, let us part: but let it not be forgotten, Edward Conway?”

“True, true! Let it not be forgotten. It shall not be forgotten. It can not be. It would not be easy for me, Clarence, to forget anything which has taken place in the last ten days of my life.”

There was a latent signification in what was said by the speaker to arouse new suspicions in the mind of the younger of the kinsmen. He saw, or fancied that he saw, a gleam of ferocity shine out from the eyes of his brother, and his own inflammable temper was about to flare up anew.

“Do you threaten, Edward Conway? Am I to understand you as speaking the language of defiance?”

“Understand me, Clarence, as speaking nothing which should not become a man and your brother.”

The reply was equivocal. That it was so, was reason sufficient why Clarence Conway should hesitate to urge a matter which might only terminate in bringing their quarrel to a crisis.

“The sooner we separate the better,” was his only answer. “Here, Edward Conway, is one of my pistols. You shall not say I sent you forth without weapons to defend you, into a forest field, possibly, with foes. The horse which you ride is a favorite. You have lost yours. Keep him till you are provided. You can always find an opportunity to return him when you are prepared to do so; and should you not, it will make no difference. Farewell: God be with you—but remember!—remember!”

The youth grasped the now reluctant hand of the elder Conway; wrung it with a soldier’s grasp—a pressure in which min-

gled feelings, all warm, all conflicting, had equal utterance;—then, springing upon his steed, he dashed rapidly into the forest and in a few moments was hidden from sight in its thickest mazes.

“Remember. Yes, Clarence Conway, I will remember. Can I ever forget! Can I ever forget the arrogance which presumes to counsel, to warn, and to threaten—to pry into my privacy—to examine my deeds—to denounce them with shame and threaten them with vengeance. I will remember.—to requite! It shall not be always thus. The game will be in my hands ere many days, and I will play it as no gamester, with all upon the cast, ever yet played the game of life before. Without pause or pity—resolved and reckless—I will speed on to the prosecution of my purposes, until my triumph is complete! I must beware, must I?—I must account for my incomings and outgoings? And why, forsooth? Because I am *your* father’s son. For the same reason do you beware! I were no son of my father if I did not resent this insolence.”

He had extricated his horse from the cover which concealed him while he was giving utterance to this soliloquy. The noble animal neighed and whinnied after his late companion. The plaintive appeal of the beast seemed to irritate his rider, whose passions, subjected to a restraint which he had found no less necessary than painful, were now seeking that vent which they had been denied for an unusual season; and under their influence he struck the animal over the nostril with the heavy hand of that hate which he fain would have bestowed upon his master.

“Remember!” he muttered, as he leaped upon the saddle. “I need no entreaty to this end, Clarence Conway. I must be a patriot at your bidding, and choose my side at your suggestion; and forbear the woman of my heart in obedience to the same royal authority. We shall see!—We shall see!”

And, as he spoke, the sheeted tempest driving in his face the while—he shook his threatening hand in the direction which his brother had taken. Turning his horse’s head upon an opposite course, he then proceeded, though at a less rapid rate, to find that shelter, which he now, for the first time, began to consider necessary.

It may have been ten minutes after their separation, when he heard a sound at a little distance which aroused his flagging attention.

"That whistle," said he to himself, "is very like our own. It may be! They should be here, if my safety were of any importance, and if that reptile Stockton would suffer them. That fellow is a spy upon me, sworn doubly to my destruction, if he can find the means. But let me find him tripping, and a shot gives him prompt dismissal. Again!—it is!—they are here—the scouts are around me, and doubtlessly the whole troop is at Muggs's this moment. *There*, he could do me no harm. Muggs is sworn my friend against all enemies, and he is true as any enemy.—Again, the signal! They shall have an echo."

Speaking thus he replied in a sound similar to that which he heard, and an immediate response, almost at his elbow, satisfied him of the truth of his first impression. He drew up his steed, repeated the whistle, and was now answered by the swift tread of approaching horses. In a few moments, one, and then another—appeared in sight, and the captain of the Black Riders of Congaree once more found himself surrounded by his men.

Their clamors, as soon as he was recognised, attested his popularity among his troop.

"Ha, Irby!—Ha, Burnet! Is it you?—and you, Gibbs—you Fisher: I rejoice to see you. Your hands, my good fellows. There! There! You are well—all well."

The confused questions and congratulations, all together, of the troopers, while they gave every pleasure to their chieftain, as convincing him of their fidelity, rendered unnecessary any attempt at answer or explanation. Nor did Edward Conway allow himself time for this. His words, though friendly enough, were few; and devoted, seemingly, to the simple business of the troop. Captain Morton—for such was the name by which only he was known to them—with the quickness of a governing instinct, derived from a few brief comprehensive questions, all that he desired to know in regard to their interests and position. He ascertained where the main body would be found, and what had taken place during his absence; and proceeded instantly to the reassumption of his command over them.

“Enough of this, my good fellows. I will see to all this at Muggs’s. We have no time now for unnecessary matter. You have work on hand. Burnet, do you take with you Gibbs, Irby, and Fisher. Push your horses down for the Wateree by the first road running left of where we now stand. Do you know the route? It leads by the clay diggings of the old Dutchman --the brick-burner—what’s his name?”

“I know it, sir——”

“Enough, then. Take that road—put the steel into your nags, but send them forward. If you are diligent you will overtake one of our worst enemies—a friend of Butler—a rebel—no less than Colonel Conway. Pursue and catch him. You can not fail to overtake him if you try for it. Take him prisoner—alive, if you can. I particularly wish that you should have him alive; but, remember, take him at every hazard. Living or dead, he must be ours.”

The dragoon lingered for further orders.

“If you succeed in taking him, bring him on to Muggs’s. Give the signal before you reach his cabin, that there may be no surprise—no mistake. Something depends on your observance of this caution; so, you will remember. Away, now, and ride for life.”

Their obedience was sufficiently prompt. In an instant they were on their way, pursuing the track which Clarence had taken for the Wateree.

“Now!” exclaimed the outlaw-chief, with exultation—“now there is some chance for vengeance. If they succeed in taking him alive, I will practise upon him to his utter blindness—I will do him no harm, unless a close lodging-house will do him harm. If they kill him—well, it is only one of those chances of war which he voluntarily incurs: it is only the lower cast of the die. Yet, I trust it may not be so. I am not yet prepared for that. He is my father’s son. He has stood beside me in danger. He deserves that I should spare him. But, even for all this he may not be spared, if he is to triumph over me—to sway me with his arrogance—to achieve all victories in love as in war. In love!—God, what a strange nature is this of mine! How feeble am I when I think of her! And of her I can not help

but think ; her beauty, her pride of soul—ay, even her arrogance, I can think of with temper and with love. But his—no, no ! He has spoken too keenly to my soul ; and when he forbids that I should seek and see *her*, he forfeits every claim. Let them slay him, if they please ; it can only come to this at last.”

And, with these words, striking with his open palm upon the neck of his horse, he drove him forward to Muggs's. His entrance we have already seen, and the wonder it excited : the wonder in all, the consternation in one. The troopers, with one voice, cried out for their ancient captain ; and Stockton, confounded and defeated, could only hoarsely mingle his congratulations with the rest, in accents more faltering, and, as the outlaw captain well apprehended, with far less sincerity.

CHAPTER VII.

CAPTIVITY—FINESSE.

EDWARD MORTON bestowed upon his second officer but a single glance, beneath which his eye fell and his soul became troubled. That glance was one of equal scorn and suspicion. It led the treacherous subordinate, with the natural tendency of a guilty conscience, to apprehend that all his machinations had been discovered ; that some creature of his trust had proved treacherous ; and that he stood in the presence of one who had come with the full purpose of vengeance and of punishment.

But, though secure as yet, in this respect, Lieutenant Stockton was not equally so in others, scarcely of less consequence. He had neglected, even if he had not betrayed, his trust. He had kept aloof from the place of danger, when his aid was required, and left his captain to all those risks—one of which has been already intimated to the reader—which naturally followed a duty of great and peculiar exposure, to which the latter had devoted himself. Even when his risk had been taken, and the dangers incurred, Stockton had either forborne that search after

his superior, or had so pursued it as to render his efforts almost ineffectual.

But he had undertaken the toils of villany in vain, and without reaping any of its pleasant fruits. The return of his superior, as it were from the grave, left him utterly discomfited. His rewards were as far off as ever from his hopes; and, to his fears, his punishments were at hand.

His apprehensions were not wholly without foundation. So soon as the chief of the Black Riders could relieve himself from the oppressive congratulations which encountered his safe restoration to his troop, he turned upon the lieutenant, and, with an indignation more just than prudent, declared his disapprobation of his conduct.

“I know not, Lieutenant Stockton, how you propose to satisfy Lord Rawdon for your failure to bring your men to Dukes’s, as I ordered you; but I shall certainly report to him your neglect in such language as shall speak my own opinion of it, however it may influence his. The consequences of your misconduct are scarcely to be computed. You involved me individually in an unnecessary risk of life, and lost a happy opportunity of striking one of the best blows in the cause of his majesty which has been stricken this campaign. The whole troop of the rebel Butler was in our hands; they must have been annihilated but for your neglect—a neglect, too, which is wholly unaccountable, as I myself had prescribed every step in your progress, and waited for your coming with every confidence in the result.”

“I did not know, sir, that there was any prospect of doing anything below here, and I heard of a convoy on the road to General Greene——”

“Even that will not answer, Lieutenant Stockton. You were under orders for one duty, and presumed too greatly on your own judgment when you took the liberty of making a different disposition of the troop left to your guidance. You little dream, sir, how nigh you were to ruin. But a single hour saved you from falling in with all Sumter’s command, and putting an end for ever to your short-lived authority. And yet, sir, you are ambitious of sole command. You have your emissaries among the troop urging your fitness to lead them; as if such proo s

were ever necessary to those who truly deserve them. Your emissaries, sir, little know our men. It is enough for them to know that you left your leader in the hands of his enemies, at a time when all his risks were incurred for their safety and your own.'

"I have no emissaries, sir, for any such purpose," replied the subordinate, sulkily; his temper evidently rising from the unpleasant exposure which was making before those who had only recently been so well tutored in his superior capacities. "You do me injustice, sir—you have a prejudice against me. For—"

"Prejudice, and against *you!*" was the scornful interruption of the chief. "No more, sir; I will not hear you farther. You shall have the privilege of being heard by those against whom you can urge no such imputations. Your defence shall be made before a court martial. Yield up your sword, sir, to Mr. Barton."

The eye of the lieutenant, at this mortifying moment, caught that of the maimed veteran Muggs; and the exulting satisfaction which was expressed by the latter was too much for his firmness. He drew the sword, but instead of tendering the hilt to the junior officer who had been commanded to receive it, confronted him with the point, exclaiming desperately—

"My life first! I will not be disgraced before the men!"

"Your life, then!" was the fierce exclamation of Morton, spoken with instant promptness, as he hurled the pistol with which Clarence Conway had provided him, full in the face of the insubordinate. At that same moment, the scarcely less rapid movement of Muggs, enabled him to grasp the offender about the body with his single arm.

The blow of the pistol took effect, and the lieutenant would have been as completely prostrated, as he was stunned by it, had it not been for the supporting grasp of the landlord, which kept him from instantly falling. The blood streamed from his mouth and nostrils. Half conscious only, he strove to advance, and his sword was partially uplifted as if to maintain with violence the desperate position which he had taken; but, by this time, a dozen ready hands were about him. The weapon was wrested from his hold, and the wounded man thrust down

upon the floor of the hovel, where he was held by the heavy knee of more than one of the dragoons, while others were found equally prompt to bind his arms.

They were all willing to second the proceedings, however fearful, of a chief whose determination of character they well knew, and against whom they also felt they had themselves somewhat offended, in the ready acquiescence which most of them had given to the persuasive arguments and entreaties of Darcy. This latter person had now no reverence to display for the man in whose cause he had been only too officious. He was one of those moral vanes which obey the wind of circumstances, and acquire that flexibility of habit, which, after a little while, leaves it impossible to make them fix anywhere. He did not, it is true, join in the clamor against his late ally; but he kept sufficiently aloof from any display of sympathy. His own selfish fears counselled him to forbearance, and he was not ambitious of the crown of martyrdom in the cause of any principle so purely abstract as that of friendship. To him, the chief of the Black Riders gave but a single look, which sufficiently informed him that his character was known and his conduct more than suspected. The look of his superior had yet another meaning, and that was one of unmitigated contempt.

Unlike the lieutenant, Darcy was sufficiently prudent, however, not to display by glance, word, or action, the anger which he felt. He wisely subdued the resentment in his heart, preferring to leave to time the work of retribution. But he did not, any more than Stockton, forego his desire for ultimate revenge. He was one of those who could wait, and whose patience, like that of the long unsatisfied creditor, served only to increase, by the usual interest process, the gross amount of satisfaction which must finally ensue. It was not now for the first time that he was compelled to experience the scorn of their mutual superior. It may be stated, in this place, that the alliance between Stockton and himself was quite as much the result of their equal sense of injury, at the hands of Morton, as because of any real sympathy between the parties.

“Take this man hence,” was the command of Morton, turning once more his eyes upon the prostrate Stockton. “Take him

hence, Sergeant Fisher—see him well bestowed—have his wants attended to, but see, above all things, that he escape not. He has gone too far in his folly to be trusted much longer with himself, till we are done with him entirely. This, I trust, will soon be the case.”

This order gave such a degree of satisfaction to the landlord, Muggs, that he found it impossible to conceal his delight. A rear of pleasure burst from his lips.

“Ho! ho! ho!—I thought it would be so.—I knew it must come to this. I thought it a blasted bad sign from the beginning, when he was so willing to believe the cappin was turned into small meat, and the choppings not to be come at. There’s more of them sort of hawks in these parts, cappin, if ’twas worth any white man’s while to look after them.”

The last sentence was spoken with particular reference to Ensign Darcy, and the eyes of the stout landlord were fixed upon that person with an expression of equal triumph and threatening; but neither Darcy nor Morton thought it advisable to perceive the occult signification of his glance. The occupations of the latter, meanwhile, did not cease with the act of summary authority which we have witnessed. He called up to him an individual from his troop whose form and features somewhat resembled his own—whose general intelligence might easily be conjectured from his features, and whose promptness seemed to justify the special notice of his captain. This person he addressed as Ben Williams—a person whom the landlord, Muggs, had designated, in a previous chapter, as the most fitting to succeed their missing leader in the event of his loss. That Morton himself entertained some such opinion, the course of events will show.

“Williams,” he said, after the removal of Stockton had been effected—“there is a game to play in which you must be chief actor. It is necessary that you should take my place, and seem for a while to be the leader of the Black Riders. The motive for this will be explained to you in time. Nay, more, it is necessary that I should seem your prisoner. You will probably soon have a prisoner in fact, in whose sight I would also occupy the same situation. Do with me then as one.—Hark!—That

is even now the signal!—They will soon be here. Muggs, bar the entrance for a while, until everything is ready. Now, Williams, be quick; pass your lines about my arms and bind me securely. Let one or more of your men watch me with pistols cocked, and show, all of you, the appearance of persons who have just made an important capture. I will tell you more hereafter.”

The subordinate was too well accustomed to operations of the kind suggested, to offer any unnecessary scruple, or to need more precise directions. The outlaw was bound accordingly; placed, as he desired, upon a bulk that stood in a corner of the wigwam, while two black-faced troopers kept watch beside him. The signal was repeated from without; the parties, from the sound, being evidently close at hand. The chief of the outlaws whispered in the ear of his subordinate such farther instructions as were essential to his object.

“Keep me in this situation, in connection with the prisoner—should he be brought—for the space of an hour. Let us be left alone for that space of time. Let us then be separated, while you come to me in private. We shall then be better able to determine for the future.”

The hurried preparations being completed; the chief, now seemingly a closely-watched and strongly-guarded prisoner, gave orders to throw open the entrance, and, in the meantime, subdued his features to the expression of a well-grounded dissatisfaction with a situation equally unapprehended and painful.

The capture of Clarence Conway was not such an easy matter. It will be remembered that, when he separated from his brother, under the influence of feelings of a most exciting nature, he had given his horse a free spur, and dashed forward at full speed to regain his place of safety in the swamp. The rapidity of his start, had he continued at the same pace, would have secured him against pursuit. But, as his blood cooled, and his reflective mood assumed the ascendancy, his speed was necessarily lessened; and, by the time that his treacherous kinsman was enabled to send the troopers in pursuit, his horse was suffered quietly to pick his way forward, in a gait most suited to his own sense of comfort.

The consequence was inevitable. The pursuers gained rapidly upon him, and owing to the noise occasioned by the rain pattering heavily upon the leaves about him, he did not hear the sound of their horses' feet, until escape became difficult. At the moment when he became conscious of the pursuit, he was taught to perceive how small were his chances of escape from it. Suddenly, he beheld a strange horseman, on each side of him, while two others were pressing earnestly forward in the rear. None of them could have been fifty yards from him at the moment when he was first taught his danger. The keenness of the chase, the sable costume which the pursuers wore, left him in no doubt of their character as enemies; and with just enough of the sense of danger to make him act decisively, the fearless partisan drew forth his pistol, cocked it without making any unnecessary display, and, at the same time, drove the rowel into the flanks of his steed.

A keen eye sent forward upon the path which he was pursuing, enabled him to see that it was too closely covered with woods to allow him to continue much farther his present rate of flight, and with characteristic boldness, he resolved to turn his course to the right, where the path was less covered with undergrowth, and on which his encounter would be with a single enemy only. The conflict with him, he sanguinely trusted, might be ended before the others could come up.

The action, with such a temperament as that of Clarence Conway, was simultaneous with the thought; and a few moments brought him upon the one opponent, while his sudden change of direction, served, for a brief space, to throw the others out.

The trooper, whom he thus singled out for the struggle, was a man of coolness and courage, but one scarcely so strong of limb, or so well exercised in conflict, as the partisan. He readily comprehended the purpose of the latter, and his own resolution was taken to avoid the fight, if he could, and yet maintain his relative position, during the pursuit, with the enemy he chased. To dash aside from the track, yet to push forward at the same time, was his design; at all events, to keep out of pistol-shot himself, for a while at least, yet be able, at any moment, to

bring his opponent within range of his own weapon. Such a policy, by delaying the flight of the latter, until the whole party should come up, would render the capture inevitable.

But he was not suffered to pursue this game at his own pleasure. The moment he swerved from the track, Conway dashed after him with increased earnestness, taking particular care to keep himself, meanwhile, between the individual and his friends. In this way he seemed to drive the other before him, and, as his own speed was necessarily increased under these circumstances, the man thus isolated became anxious about his position, and desirous to return. In a mutual struggle of this sort, the event depended upon the comparative ability of the two horses, and the adroitness, as horsemen, of the several riders. In both respects the advantage was with Conway; and he might have controlled every movement of his enemy, but for the proximity of those who were now pressing on behind him.

The moment became one of increasing anxiety. They were approaching rapidly nigher, and the disparity of force in their favor was too considerable to leave him a single hope of a successful issue should he be forced to an encounter with the whole of them. The wits of the partisan were all put into activity. He soon saw that he must drive the individual before him entirely out of his path, or be forced to stand at bay against an attack in which defence was hopeless. His resolve was instantaneous; and, reasonably calculating against the probability of any pistol-shot from either taking effect while under rapid flight, and through the misty rain then driving into their mutual faces, he resolved to run down his enemy by the sheer physical powers of his horse, in defiance of the latter's weapon and without seeking to use his own. He braced himself up for this exertion, and timed his movement fortunately, at a moment when a dense thicket presenting itself immediately in the way of the man before him, rendered necessary a change in the direction of his flight.

His reckless and sudden plunge forward discomposed the enemy, who found the partisan on his haunches at a time when to turn his steed became equally necessary and difficult. To wheel aside from the thicket was the instinctive movement of the horse.

himself, who naturally inclined to the more open path ; but, just under these circumstances, in his agitation, the trooper endeavored to incline his bridle hand to the opposite side, in order that he might employ his weapon. The conflict between his steed's instinct and his own, rendered his aim ineffectual. His pistol was emptied, but in vain ; and the rush of Conway's horse immediately followed. The shock of conflict with the more powerful animal, precipitated the trooper, horse and man, to the earth, and the buoyant partisan went over him with the rapidity of a wind-current.

A joyous shout attested his consciousness of safety—the outpourings of a spirit to which rapid action was always a delight, and strife itself nothing more than the exercise of faculties which seemed to have been expressly adapted for all its issues of agility and strength. Secure of safety, Conway now dashed onward without any apprehension, and exulting in the fullest sense of safety ; but, in a moment after, he had shared the fortune of him he had just overthrown. A sudden descent of one of the Wateree hills was immediately before him, and in the increasing dimness of the twilight, and under the rapidity of his flight, he did not observe that its declivity of yellow clay had been freshly washed into a gully. His horse plunged forward upon the deceptive and miry surface, and lost his footing. A series of ineffectual plunges which he made to recover himself, only brought the poor beast headlong to the base of the hill, where he lay half stunned and shivering. His girth had broken in the violent muscular efforts which he made to arrest his fall, and his rider, in spite of every exertion of skill and strength, was thrown forward, and fell, though with little injury, upon the yellow clay below. He had barely time to recover his feet, but not his horse, when the pursuers were upon him. Resistance, under existing circumstances, would have been worse than useless ; and with feelings of mortification, much better imagined than described, he yielded himself, with the best possible grace, to the hands of his captors.

CHAPTER VI, I

ROUGH USAGE AMONG THE RIDERS.

NOTHING could exceed the surprise of Clarence Conway, when, conducted by his captors into the house of Muggs, he beheld the condition of his kinsman. His ardent and unsuspecting nature at once reproached him with those doubts which he had entertained of the fidelity of the latter. He now wondered at himself for the ready credence which he had been disposed to yield, on grounds so slight and unsatisfactory as they then appeared to be, to the imputations against one so near to him by blood; and with the natural rapidity of the generous nature, he forgot, in his regrets for his own supposed errors, those of which his brother had, as he well knew, most certainly been guilty. He forgot that it was not less a reproach against Edward Conway—even if he was misrepresented as friendly to the cause of the invader—that he had forborne to show that he was friendly to that of his country; and, in that moment of generous forgetfulness, even the suspicious conduct of the fugitive, in relation to his own affair of heart, passed from his memory.

“Can it be!—Is it you, Edward Conway, that I find in this predicament?” were his first words when—the speaker being equally secured—they were left alone together.

“You see me,” was the reply. “My ill reputation with the one side does not, it appears, commend me to any favor with the other.”

“And these men?” said Clarence, inquiringly.

“Are, it would seem, no other persons than your famous Black Riders. I have had a taste of their discipline already, and shall probably enjoy something more before they are done with me. It appears that they have discovered that I am as rabid a rebel as, by Butler’s men, I was deemed a tory. They charge me with some small crimes—such as killing king’s men

and burning their houses, stabbing women and roasting children — to all of which charges I have pleaded not guilty, though with very little chance of being believed. I can not complain, however, that they should be as incredulous in my behalf as my own father's son."

"Do not reproach me, Edward. Do me no injustice. You can not deny that circumstances were against you, so strong as almost to justify belief in the mind of your father himself. If any man ever struggled against conviction, I was that man."

"Clarence Conway, you perhaps deceive yourself with that notion. But the truth is, your jealousy on the subject of Flora Middleton has made you only too ready to believe anything against me. But I will not reproach *you*. Nay, I have resolved, believe what you may, hereafter to say nothing in my defence or justification. I have done something too much of this already for my own sense of self-respect. Time must do the rest—I will do no more."

The generous nature of Clarence deeply felt these expressions. His wily kinsman well understood that nature, and deliberately practised upon it. He listened to the explanations and assurances of the former with the doggedness of one who feels that he has an advantage, and shows himself resolute to keep it. Still he was too much of a proficient in the knowledge of human nature to overact the character. He spoke but few words. He seldom looked at his brother while he spoke, and an occasional half-suppressed sigh betokened the pains of a spirit conscious of the keenest wrong, yet too proud even to receive the atonement which reminds him of it. An expression of sorrow and sadness, but not unkindness, prevailed over his features. His words, if they did not betoken despondency, yet conveyed a feeling almost of indifference to whatever might betide him. The language of his look seemed to say —

"Suspected by my best friends, my father's son among them, it matters little what may now befall me. Let the enemy do his worst. I care not for these bonds — I care for nothing that he can do."

Nothing, to the noble heart, is so afflicting as the conscious

ness of having done injustice; and to witness the suffering of another, in consequence of our injustice, is one of the most excruciating of human miseries to a nature of this order. Such was the pang at this moment in the bosom of Clarence Conway. He renewed his efforts to soothe and to appease the resentments of his kinsman, with all the sollicitude of truth.

“Believe me, Edward, I could not well think otherwise than I have thought, or do other than I have done. You surely can not deny that you placed yourself in a false position. It would have been wonderful, indeed, if your course had not incurred suspicion.”

“True friendship seldom suspects, and is the last to yield to the current, when its course bears against the breast it loves. But let us say no more on this subject, Clarence. It has always been a painful one to me; and just now, passing, as I may say, from one sort of bondage to another, it is particularly so. It is, perhaps, unnecessary, situated as we are, that we should any longer refer to it. The doubts of the past may be as nothing to the dangers of the future. If this banditti be as you have described them, we shall have little time allowed us to discuss the past; and, for the future!——”

He paused.

“And yet, believe me, Edward, it makes me far happier to see you in these bonds, subjected to all the dangers which they imply, than to suffer from the accursed suspicion that you were the leader of this banditti.”

“I thank you—indeed I thank you very much—for nothing! It may surprise you to hear me say that your situation yields me no pleasure. Your sources of happiness and congratulation strike me as being very peculiar.”

“Edward Conway, why will you misunderstand me?”

“Do I?”

“Surely. What have I said to make you speak so bitterly?”

“Nothing, perhaps;—but just now, Clarence, my thoughts and feelings are rather bitter than sweet, and may be supposed likely to impart something of their taste to what I say. But I begged that we might forbear the subject—all subjects—at this time; for the very reason that I feared something might be

spoken by one or both which would make us think more unkindly of each other than before—which would increase the gulf between us.”

“I think not unkindly of you, Edward. I regret what I have spoken unkindly, though under circumstances which, I still insist, might justify the worst suspicion in the mind of the best of friends. There is no gulf between us now, Edward Conway.”

“Ay, but there is; an impassable one for both—a barrier which we have built up with mutual industry, and which must stand between us for ever. Know you Flora Middleton? Ha! Do you understand me now, Clarence Conway? I see you do—you are silent.”

Clarence was, indeed, silent. Painful was the conviction that made him so. He felt the truth of what his brother had spoken. He felt that there *was* a gulf between them; and he felt also that the look and manner of his kinsman, while he spoke the name, together with the tone of voice in which it was spoken, had most unaccountably, and most immeasurably, enlarged that gulf. What could be the meaning of this? What was that mysterious antipathy of soul which could comprehend so instantly the instinct hate and bitterness in that of another? Clarence felt at this moment that, though his suspicions of Edward Conway, as the chief of the Black Riders, were all dissipated by the position in which he found him, yet he loved him still less than before. The tie of blood was weakened yet more than ever, and its secret currents were boiling up in either breast, with suppressed but increasing hostility.

The pause was long and painful which ensued between them. At length Clarence broke the silence. His manner was subdued, but the soul within him was strengthened. The course of his kinsman had not continued to its close as judicious as it seemed at the beginning. It had been a wiser policy had he forborne even the intimation of reproach—had he assumed an aspect of greater kindness and love toward his companion in misfortune, and striven, by a studious display of cheerfulness, to prove to his brother that he was only apprehensive lest the situation in which the latter had found him might tend too much to his own self-reproach.

Such would have been the course of a generous foe. Such should have been the course of one toward a generous friend. Forbearance, at such a moment, would have been the very best proof of the presence of a real kindness. But it was in this very particular that the mind of Edward Conway was weak. He was too selfish a man to know what magnanimity is. He did not sufficiently comprehend the nature of the man he addressed; and, though the situation in which the latter found him had its effect, yet the policy, which he subsequently pursued, most effectually defeated many of the moral advantages which must have resulted to him, in the mind of his brother, from a more liberal train of conduct.

The reference to Flora Middleton placed Clarence on his guard. It reminded him that there were more grounds of difference between himself and kinsman than he had been just before prepared to remember. It reminded him that Edward Conway had been guilty of a mean evasion, very like a falsehood, in speaking of this lady; and this remembrance revived all his former personal distrusts, however hushed now might be all such as were purely political. Edward Conway discovered that he had made a false move in the game the moment that his brother resumed his speech. He was sagacious enough to perceive his error, though he vainly then might have striven to repair it. Clarence, meanwhile, proceeded as follows, with a grave severity of manner, which proved that, on one subject at least, he could neither be abused nor trifled with.

“You have named Flora Middleton, Edward Conway. With me that name is sacred. I owe it to my own feelings, as well as to her worth, that it should not be spoken with irreverence. What purpose do you propose by naming her to me, at this moment, and with such a suggestion?”

The outlaw assumed a bolder tone and a higher position than he took when the same subject was discussed between them in the swamp. There was an air of defiance in his manner, as he replied, which aroused all the gall in his brother's bosom.

“Am I to tell you now, for the first time, Clarence Conway that I love Flora Middleton?”

“Ha!—Is it so?—Well!”

“It is even so! I love Flora Middleton—as I long have loved her.”

“You are bold, Edward Conway! Am I to understand from this that you propose to urge your claims?”

“One does not usually entertain such feelings without some hope to gratify them; and I claim to possess all the ordinary desires and expectations of humanity.”

“Be it so, then, Edward Conway,” replied Clarence, with a strong effort at composure. “But,” he added, “if I mistake not, there was an understanding between us on this subject. You—”

“Ay, ay, to pacify you—to avoid strife with my father’s son, Clarence Conway, I made some foolish promise to subdue my own feelings out of respect to yours—some weak and unmanly concessions!”

“Well! Have you now resolved otherwise?”

“Why, the truth is, Clarence, it is something ridiculous for either of us to be talking of our future purposes, when in such a predicament as this. Perhaps we had better be at our prayers, preparing for the worst. If half be true that is said of these Black Riders, a short shrift and a sure cord are the most probable of their gifts. We need not quarrel about a woman on the edge of the grave.”

“Were death sure, and at hand, Edward Conway, my principles should be equally certain, and expressed without fear. Am I to understand that you have resolved to disregard my superior claims, and to pursue Flora Middleton with your attentions?”

“Your superior claims, Clarence,” replied the other, “consist simply, if I understand the matter rightly, in your having seen the lady before myself, and by so many months only having the start of me in our mutual admiration of her charms. I have not learned that she has given you to suppose that she regards you with more favor than she does myself.”

A warm flush passed over the before pale features of Clarence Conway. His lip was agitated, and its quivering only suppressed by a strong effort.

“Enough, sir!” he exclaimed—“we understand each other.”

There was probably some little mockery in the mood of Edward Conway as he urged the matter to a further point.

“But let me *know*, Clarence. Something of my own course will certainly depend—that is, if I am ever again free from the clutches of these——” The sentence was left unfinished by the speaker, as if through an apprehension that he might have more auditors than the one he addressed. He renewed the sentence, cautiously omitting the offensive member:—

“Something of my course, Clarence, will surely depend on my knowledge of your claims. If they are superior to mine, or to those of a thousand others—if she has given you to understand that she has a preference——”

The flush increased upon the cheek of the younger kinsman as he replied—

“Let me do her justice, sir. It is with some sense of shame that I speak again of her in a discussion such as this. Miss Middleton has given me no claim—she has shown me no preference—such as I could build upon for an instant. But, my claim was on *you*, Edward Conway. You were carried by me to her dwelling. She was made known to you by me; and, before this was done, I had declared to you my own deep interest in her. You saw into the secret and sacred plans of my heart—you heard from my own lips the extent of my affection for her; and—but I can speak no more of this without anger, and anger here is impotence. Take your course, Edward Conway, and assert your desires as you may. Henceforward I understand you, and on this subject beg to be silent.”

Edward Conway was not unwilling that further discussion of this subject should cease. He had effected the object which he aimed at when he broached it; and tacitly it was felt by both parties, that words were no longer satisfactory, as weapons, in such an argument as theirs. The silence was unbroken by either, and the two fettered captives sat apart, their eyes no longer meeting.

The hour had elapsed which, by the previous instructions of the outlaw chief, had been accorded to the interview between himself and kinsman. The object of his *finesse* had, as he believed, been fully answered; and, at this stage of the interview,

Williams his counterfeit presentment made his appearance, with all due terrors of authority, clad in sable, savage in hair and beard, with a brow clothed in gloomy and stern purposes, and as if prepared to pronounce the doom which the fearful reputation of the Black Riders might well have counselled the innocent prisoner to expect. But something further of the farce remained to be played out, and Clarence Conway was the curious witness to a long examination to which his fellow-prisoner was subjected, the object of which seemed to be to establish the fact that Edward Conway was himself a most inveterate rebel. A part of this examination may be given.

“You do not deny that your name is Conway?”

“I do not,” was the reply.

“Colonel Conway, of Sumter’s Brigade?”

“I am Colonel Conway, of Sumter’s Brigade,” said Clarence, interposing.

“Time enough to answer for yourself when you are asked! —that story won’t go down with us, my good fellow,” sternly exclaimed the acting chief of the banditti. “Shumway,” he exclaimed, turning to a subordinate, “why the d—l were these d—d rebels put together? They have been cooking up a story between them, and hanging now will hardly get the truth out of either! We’ll see what Muggs can tell us. He should know this fellow Conway.”

“Muggs has gone to bed, sir.”

“Wake him up and turn him out, at the invitation of a rope’s end. I’m suspicious that Muggs is half a rebel himself, he’s lived so long in this rascally neighborhood, and must be looked after.”

Shumway disappeared, and the examination proceeded.

“Do you still deny that you are Colonel Conway, of Sumter’s brigade? Beware now of your answer—we have other rebels to confront you with.”

The question was still addressed to the elder of the kinsmen. His reply was made with grave composure. “I do. My name is Conway, as I declared to you before; but I am not of Sumter’s brigade, nor of any brigade. I am not a colonel, and never hope to be made one.”

“Indeed! but you hope to get off with that d—d pack of lies, do you, in spite of all the evidence against you? But you are mistaken. I wouldn't give a continental copper for the safety of your skin, colonel.”

“If the commission of Governor Rutledge of South Carolina will be any evidence to show who is, and who is not, Colonel Conway, of Sumter's brigade,” was the second interruption of Clarence, “that commission will be found in my pocket.”

“And what will that prove, you d—d rebel, but that it has been slipped from one to the other as you each wanted it. Your shifting commissions are well known make-shifts among you, and we know too well their value to put much faith in them. But can you guess, my good fellow,” turning to Clarence, “you, who are so anxious to prove yourself a colonel—can you guess what it will cost you to establish the fact? Do you know that a swinging bough will be your first halting-place, and your first bow shall be made to a halter?”

“If you think to terrify me by such threats, you are mistaken in your man,” replied Clarence, with features which amply denoted the wholesale scorn within his bosom; “and if you dare to carry your threats into execution, you as little know the men of Sumter's brigade, the meanest of whom would promptly peril his own life to exact fearful and bloody retribution for the deed. I am Colonel Conway, and, dog of a tory, I defy you. Do your worst. I know you dare do nothing of the sort you threaten. I defy and spit upon you.”

The face of the outlaw blackened:—Clarence rose to his feet.

“Ha! think you so? We shall see. Shumway, Frink, Gasson!—you three are enough to saddle this fiery rebel to his last horse. Noose him, you slow moving scoundrels, to the nearest sapling, and let him grow wiser in the wind. To your work, villains—away!”

The hands of more than one of the ruffians were already on the shoulders of the partisan. Though shocked at the seeming certainty of a deed which he had not been willing to believe they would venture to execute, he yet preserved the fearless aspect which he had heretofore shown. His lips still uttered the language of defiance. He made no concessions, he asked

for no delay — he simply denounced against them the vengeance of his command, and that of his reckless commander, whose fiery energy of soul and rapidity of execution they well knew.

His language tended still farther to exasperate the person who acted in the capacity of the outlaw chief. Furiously, as if to second the subordinates in the awful duty in which they seemed to him to linger, he grasped the throat of Clarence Conway with his own hands, and proceeded to drag him forward. He did not see the significant gesture of head, glance of eye, and impatient movement of Edward Conway, while he thundered out his commands and curses. The latter could not, while seeking to preserve the new character in which he had placed himself, take any more decided means to make his wishes understood; and it was with feelings of apprehension and annoyance, new even to himself, that he beheld the prompt savage, to whom he had intrusted the temporary command, about to perform a deed which a secret and mysterious something in his soul would not permit him to authorize or behold, however much he might have been willing to reap its pleasant fruits when done.

There was evidently no faltering in the fearful purpose of his representative. Everything was serious. He was too familiar with such deeds to make him at all heedful of consequences; and the proud bearing of the youth; the unmitigated scorn in his looks and language; the hateful words which he had used, and the threats which he had denounced; while they exasperated all around, almost maddened the ruffian in command, to whom such defiance was new, and with whom the taking of life was a circumstance equally familiar and indifferent.

“*Three minutes for prayer is all the grace I give him!*” he cried, hoarsely, as he helped the subordinates to drag the destined victim toward the door.

These were the last words he was allowed to utter. He himself was not allowed a single minute. The speech was scarcely spoken, when he fell prostrate on his face, stricken in the mouth by a rifle-bullet, which entered through an aperture in the wall opposite. His blood and brains bespattered the breast of Clarence Conway whom his falling body also bore to the floor of the apartment.

A wild shout from without followed the shot, and rose, strong and piercing, above all the clamor within. In that shout Clarence could not doubt that he heard the manly voice of the faithful Jack Bannister, and the deed spoke for itself. It could have been the deed of a friend only.

CHAPTER IX.

A CRISIS.

THE sensation produced on all the parties by this sudden stroke of retribution was indescribable. The fate of Clarence Conway was suspended for a while. The executioners stood aghast. They relaxed their hold upon the prisoner; all their powers being seemingly paralyzed in amazement and alarm. Tacitly, every eye, with the instinct of an ancient habit, was turned upon Edward Conway. He, too, had partaken, to a large degree, of the excitement of the scene. The old habits of command reobtained their ascendancy. He forgot, for the instant, the novel position in which he stood; the assumed character which he played, and all the grave mummery of his bondage and disguise. Starting to his feet, when the first feeling of surprise had passed, he shouted aloud in the language of authority.

“Away, knaves, and follow. Why do you gape and loiter? Pursue the assassin. Let him not escape you! Away!”

He was obeyed by all the troopers present. They rushed headlong from the dwelling with a sanguinary shout. The two brothers, still bound, were left alone together. The paroxysm of passion in the one was over. He was recalled to a consciousness of the wily game he had been playing the moment that he started to his feet and issued his commands. The pressure of the tight cords upon his arms, when he would have extended them to his men, brought back all his memories. In an instant he felt his error, and apprehended the consequences. His eye

naturally turned in search of his kinsman, who stood erect, a surprised but calm spectator.

He had witnessed the action, had seen the excitement, and heard the language of Edward Conway; but these did not seem to him too extravagant for the temper of one easily moved, who was yet innocent of any improper connection with the criminals. The circumstances which had taken place were sufficiently exciting to account for these ebullitions, without awakening any suspicions of the truth. It is true that the fierce command, so familiarly addressed to the robbers by their prisoner, did seem strange enough to the unsuspecting Clarence; but even this was natural enough. Nor was it less so that they should so readily obey orders coming from any lips which, to them, conveyed so correctly the instructions to their duty. Besides, the clamor, the uproar, the confusion and hubbub of the scene, not to speak of those conflicting emotions under which Clarence Conway suffered at a moment so full, seemingly, of the last peril to himself, served to distract his senses and impair the just powers of judgment in his mind. He felt that Edward Conway had acted unexpectedly—had shown a singular activity which did not seem exactly called for, and was scarce due to those in whose behalf it was displayed; but, making due allowance for the different effects of fright and excitement upon different temperaments, he did not regard his conduct as strange or unnatural, however unnecessary it might seem, and, perhaps, impolitic. It was the first thought in his mind that Edward Conway, in his great agitation, did not seem to recollect that the assassination which had taken place was probably the only event which could then have saved his life.

These reflections did not occur to the mind of the latter. Conscious of equal guilt and indiscretion, the apprehensions of Edward Conway were all awakened for his secret. The lowering and suspicious glance which he watched in the eye of his kinsman, and which had its origin in a portion of the previous conference between them, he was at once ready to ascribe to the discovery, by the latter, of his own criminal connection with the outlaws. In his anxiety, he was not aware that he had not said enough to declare his true character—that he had only

used the language which any citizen might employ without censure, on beholding the performance, by another, of any sudden and atrocious outrage.

So impressed was he with the conviction that he had betrayed the whole truth by his imprudence, that the resolution in his mind was partly formed to declare himself boldly and bid defiance to all consequences. What had he now to fear? was his natural reflection. Why should he strive longer to keep terms with one with whom he must inevitably break in the end? Clarence Conway was his rival, was his enemy, and was in his power. He had already felt the humiliation resulting from the unbecoming equivocal positions in which he stood to him. He had bowed to him, when he felt how much more grateful would be the mood to battle with him. He had displayed the smile of conciliation, when, in his heart, he felt all the bitterness of dislike and hate. Why should he longer seek to maintain appearances with one from whom he now had seemingly nothing to fear? Why not, at once, by a bold avowal of his course, justify, in the language of defiance, the hostile position in which he stood equally to his country and his kinsman?

Such a course would amply account for the past; and, in those arguments by which the loyalists of that day found a sanction for their adherence to the mother-country, he might well claim all the rights of position due to one, whatever may be his errors of judgment, who draws his sword in behalf of his principles.

Such were some of the arguments drawn from the seeming necessity of the case, which rapidly passed through the mind of Edward Conway as he watched the play of mingled surprise and disquiet in the features of his kinsman. But they were not conclusive. They were still combated by the last lingering sentiments of humanity and blood. Clarence Conway was still his kinsman, and more than that, he owed him a life.

"Besides," was the language of his second thoughts, "his myrmidons even now may be around us. Let us first see the result of this pursuit."

New apprehensions arose from this last reflection. That the followers of Clarence Conway were not far off was the very

natural reflection of every mind, after the sudden and fearful death of him who had been the chosen representative of their chief. That the shot which slew Williams was meant for the chief of the Black Riders, was his own reflection; and it counselled continued prudence for the present. The game which he proposed in the prosecuting his purposes equally with Flora Middleton and his brother, was best promoted by his present forbearance—by his still continuing, at least while in the presence of Clarence Conway, to preserve his doubtful position as a prisoner.

He sank back, accordingly, upon the bulk from which he had arisen in the first moment of the alarm. His efforts were addressed to the task of composing his features, and assuming the subdued aspect of one who stands in equal doubt and apprehension of his fate. Some moments of anxiety elapsed, in which neither of the kinsmen spoke. Clarence, in the meantime, had also resumed his seat. He no longer looked toward his companion. His heart was filled with apprehension, in which his own fate had no concern. He trembled now for the life of the faithful woodman—for he did not doubt that it was he—who had tracked his footsteps, and so promptly interfered at the hazard of his own life, to exact that of his enemy. The senses of the youth were sharpened to an intense keenness. He could hear the distant clamors of the hunt without. The shouts and shrieks of rage, breaking, as they rose, far above the rush of the winds and the monotonous patterings of the rain. He was roused from an attention at once painful and unavoidable by the accents of his kinsman.

“Clarence!” said the latter, “this is a terrible affair—the murder of this man!”

“Scarcely so terrible to me;” was the cold reply—“it prolonged my life—the wretch would have murdered me, and I look upon his corse without horror or regret!”

“Impossible! His purpose was only to intimidate—he would never have dared the commission of such a crime.”

“You are yet to learn the deeds of the Black Riders; you know not how much such outlawed wretches will dare in the very desperation of their hearts.”

“That was a dreadful deed, however;—so swift, so sudden,

I confess it almost unmanned me. I felt desperate with terror I know not what I said."

"So I thought," replied Clarence, "for you actually shouted to the wretches to pursue the murderer, and he, too, that noble fellow, Jack Bannister. He has stood between me and death before. You also, Edward Conway, owe him a life."

"Do you think it was he, Clarence?"

"I have no doubt of it. I am sure of his halloo."

"If they catch him!—"

"God forbid that they should!"

"If they should not, we shall probably pay for his boldness. They will wreak their fury on our heads, if they be the bloody wretches that you describe them."

"I am prepared for the worst. I am their prisoner, but I fear nothing. I, at least, Edward Conway, am somewhat protected by the rights and usages of war; but you—"

"Much good did these rights promise you a few minutes past," said the other, sarcastically, "unless my conjecture be the right one. According to your notion, precious little respect would these men have had for the usages of war. Their own usages, by your own showing, have long since legitimated hanging and burning, and such small practices."

"I should not have perished unavenged. Nay, you see already how closely the avenger follows upon the footsteps of the criminal. For every drop of my blood shed unlawfully, there would be a fearful drain from the heart of every prisoner in the hands of Sumter."

"That, methinks, were a sorry satisfaction. To me, I confess, it would afford very little pleasure to be told, while I am swinging, that some one or more of my enemies will share my fate in order that the balance-sheet between the two armies may be struck to their mutual satisfaction. My manes would, on the other side of Styx, derive small comfort from beholding the ghost of my foe following close behind me, with a neck having a like ugly twist with my own, which he admits having received on my account."

"The jest is a bald one that's horn under the gallows," replied Clarence, gravely, with a whig proverb.

"Ay, but I am not there yet," replied the other; "and, with God's blessing, I hope that the tree and day are equally far distant which shall witness such an unhappy suspension of my limbs and labors."

"If I stand in such peril," replied Clarence Conway, "holding as I do a commission from the state authorities, I can not understand how it can be that you should escape, having, unhappily, no such sanction, and being so much more in danger from their suspicion. I sincerely trust that you will escape, Edward Conway; but you see the perilous circumstances in which you are placed by your unhappy neglect of the proper duties to your country and yourself."

"I am afraid, Clarence, that your commission will hardly prevail upon them to make any difference in their treatment of us."

"And yet, I wish to Heaven Edward Conway, that both of my father's sons were equally well provided."

"Do you really wish it, Clarence?"

"From my soul I do," was the reply. "Gladly now, could I do so, would I place my commission in your hands."

"Indeed! would you do this, Clarence Conway? Are you serious?" demanded the elder kinsman, with looks of considerable interest and surprise.

"Serious! Do you know me so little as to make such an inquiry! Would I trifle at such a moment with any man?—Could I trifle so with a kinsman? No! Bound as we both are, the desire is idle enough; but, could it be done, Edward Conway, freely would I place the parchment in your hands with all the privileges which belong to it."

"And you——"

"Would take my risk—would defy them to the last—and rely upon their fears of that justice which would certainly follow any attempt upon my life while I remain their prisoner."

The chief of the Black Riders rose from the bulk on which he had been seated, and twice, thrice, he paced the apartment without speaking. Deep shadows passed over his countenance, and low muttering sounds, which were not words, escaped at moments through his closed teeth. He seemed to be struggling

with some new emotion, which baffled his control and judgment equally. At length he stopped short in front of his kinsman. He had succeeded in composing his features, which were now mantled with a smile.

"Clarence," he exclaimed, "you are a very generous fellow. You always were, even in your boyhood. Your proffer to me loses nothing of its liberality because it would be injurious rather than beneficial to me. Your intention is everything. But, I can not accept your gift—it would be to me the shirt of Nessus. It would be my death, and if you take my counsel you will say nothing of it. Better by far had you left it in the swamp. Have you forgotten that I am here, under these very bonds, charged with no worse offence than that of being Colonel Clarence Conway. If I could be secure from this imputation, perhaps I would escape with no worse evil than the scars they have given me."

"True, true! These after matters had driven the other from my thought. I recollect—I had even given my testimony on that head. If it will serve you, I will again repeat the truth, though they hew me down the next instant."

"Say nothing rashly, Clarence. You are as excessively bold as you are generous—every way an extravagant man. Suppress your commission, if you can, for I'm doubtful if it can do you any good with these people, and it may do you serious harm. They make little heed, I fear, of law and parchment. But hark! The shouting becomes nearer and louder. They are returning; they have taken the assassin!"

"God forbid!" was the involuntary ejaculation of Clarence, while a cold shudder passed over his frame at the apprehension. "God forbid! Besides, Edward Conway, he is no assassin."

"Still generous, if not wise!" was the remark of his companion, who added: "Perhaps, Clarence, our only hope of safety depends upon their having their victim."

"I love life; life is precious to me," said the other; "but it would be a bitterness and a loathing could I feel it were to be purchased by the sacrifice of that worthy fellow."

"We shall soon see. Here they come. Our trial is at hand,"

No more words were permitted to either speaker. The uproar of conflicting voices without, the questioning and counselling, the cries and clamors, effectually stunned and silenced the two within. Then came a rush. The door was thrown open, and in poured the troop, in a state of fury, vexation, and disappointment.

They had failed to track the assassin. The darkness of the night, the prevalence of the storm, and the absence of every trace of his footsteps—which the rain obliterated as soon as it was set down—served to baffle their efforts and defeat their aim. They returned in a more savage mood of fury than before. They were now madmen. The appetite for blood, provoked by the pursuit, had been increased by the delay. Ben Williams, the man who was slain, was a favorite among the troop. They were prepared to avenge him, and, in doing this, to carry out the cruel penalty which he was about to inflict on the prisoner in the moment when he was shot down. Led on by one of the party by whom Clarence had been originally made prisoner, they rushed upon him.

“Out with him at once!” was the cry of the infuriate wretches. “To the tree—to the tree!”

“A rope, Muggs!” was the demand of one among them; and sharp knives flashed about the eyes of the young partisan in fearful proximity.

“What would you do, boys?” demanded Muggs, interposing. He alone knew the tie which existed between the prisoner and his commander. He also knew, in part at least, the objects for which the latter had put on his disguise.

“Let the prisoner alone to-night, and give him a fair trial in the morning.”

“Who talks of fair trial in the morning? Look at Ben Williams lying at your foot. You’re treading in his blood, and you talking of fair trial to his murderer.”

“But this man ain’t his murderer!”

“Same thing—same thing—wa’n’t it on his account that he was shot? Away with him to the tree. Away with him!”

“Haul him along, fellows! Here, let me lay hand on his col-

lar," cried a huge dragoon from behind. "Give's a hold on him and you'll soon see him out."

A dozen hands grappled with the youth. A dozen more contended that they might do so likewise.

"Scoundrels, give me but room and I will follow you," cried Clarence with a scorn as lofty as he would have shown in a station of the utmost security, and with tones as firm as he ever uttered at the head of his regiment.

"If nothing but my blood can satisfy you for that which is shed, take it. You shall not see me shrink from any violence which your ruffian hands may inflict. Know that I despise and defy you to the last."

"Gag him—stop his mouth. Shall the rebel flout us on our own ground?"

"Bring him forward. The blood of Ben Williams cries out to us;—why do you stand with open mouths there? Shove him ahead."

Amid such cries as these, coupled with the most shocking oaths and imprecations, they dragged forward the youth slowly, for their own numbers and conflicting violence prevented cooperation. They dragged him on until, at length, he stood in the blood, and just above the body, of the murdered man. He did not struggle, but he shrunk back naturally, with some horror, when he felt the clammy substance sticking to his feet. He readily conjectured whence it came—from what sacred sources of human life;—and, though a fearless soldier—one who, in the heat of battle, had often shed the blood of his enemy—yet the nature within him recoiled at the conviction that he stood in a puddle, which, but a little time before, had beat and bounded, all animation, and strength, and passion, in the bosom of a living man.

His shuddering recoil was mistaken by the crowd for resistance, and one ruffian, more brutal than the rest, renewing his grasp with one hand upon the collar of the youth, with the other struck him in the face.

The blow, that last indignity and violence to which the man submits, roused the swelling tides in the bosom of the youth beyond their wonted bounds. With an effort which seemed rather

an emotion of the soul than a physical endeavor, he put forth his whole strength, and the cords snapped asunder which had confined his arms, and with the rapidity of lightning he retorted the blow with such sufficient interest as prostrated the assailant at his feet.

“Now, scoundrels, if you must have blood, use your knives—for no rope shall profane my neck while I have soul to defy and power to resist you. Dogs, bloodhounds that you are, I scorn, I spit upon you. Bring forth your best man—your chief, if you have one to take the place of this carcass at my feet, that I may revile, and defy, and spit upon him also.”

A moment's pause ensued. The noble air of the man whom they environed—the prodigious strength which he had shown in snapping asunder the strong cords which had secured his limbs, commanded their admiration. Courage and strength will always produce this effect, in the minds of savage men. They beheld him with a momentary pause of wonder; but shame, to be thus baffled by a single man, lent them new audacity. They rushed upon him.

Without weapons of any kind, for he had been disarmed when first made a captive, they had no occasion to resort to that degree of violence in overcoming him, to which he evidently aimed to provoke them. It was his obvious desire to goad them on to the use of weapons which would take life, and thus effectually defeat their purpose of consigning him to the gallows;—that degrading form of death from which the gentle mind shrinks with a revulsion which the fear of the sudden stroke or the swift shot, could never occasion. Hence the abusive and strong language which he employed—language otherwise unfamiliar to his lips.

His desire might still have been gratified. Several of the more violent among the young men of the party were rushing on him with uplifted hands, in which the glittering blade was flashing and conspicuous. But the scornful demand of Clarence, with which he concluded his contumelious speech, brought a new party into the field.

This was no other than his kinsman. He had been a looker-on for some moments—not long—for the whole scene took far less time for performance than it now takes for narration. He

had watched its progress with new and rather strange emotions. At one moment, the selfish desires of his heart grew predominant. He thought of Flora Middleton, and he sank back and closed his eyes upon the objects around him, saying, in his secret heart—

“Let them go on—let him perish—why should I preserve from destruction the only obstacle to my desires?”

At the next moment, a better spirit prevailed within him. He remembered the services of Clarence to himself. He owed to him his life; and, but now, had not the generous youth tendered him for his extrication and sole use that document, which he fancied would be all-powerful in securing his own safety. The image of their mutual father came, also, to goad the unworthy son to a sense of his duty; and when he heard the fierce, proud accents of the youth—when he heard him call for “their best man, their chief, that he might defy and spit upon him,” he started to his feet.

There was but a moment left him for performance if his purpose was to save. The knives of the infuriate mob were already flourishing above their victim, and in their eyes might be seen that fanatical expression of fury which is almost beyond human power to arrest. A keen, quick, meaning glance, he gave to the landlord, Muggs; whose eyes had all the while been anxiously watchful of his leader. At the sign the latter made his way behind him, and, unobserved, with a single stroke of his knife, separated the cord which bound his arms. In another instant his voice rose superior to all their clamors.

“Hold, on your lives!” he exclaimed, leaping in among the assailants. “Back, instantly, fellows, or you will make an enemy of me! Let the prisoner alone!”

“Gad, I’m so glad!” exclaimed Muggs while the big drops of perspiration poured down his forehead. “I thought, capping, you couldn’t stand by, and see them make a finish of it.”

CHAPTER X.

SHADOWS OF COMING EVENTS.

“HOLD, comrades, you have done enough. Leave the prisoner to me! Colonel Conway, you demanded to look upon the chief of the Black Riders. He is before you. He answers, at last, to your defiance.”

And with these words, with a form rising into dignity and height, in becoming correspondence, as it were, with the novel boldness of his attitude, Edward Conway stood erect and confronted his kinsman. In the bosom of the latter a thousand feelings were at conflict. Vexation at the gross imposition which had been practised upon him—scorn at the baseness of the various forms of subterfuge which the other had employed in his serpent-like progress; but, more than all, the keen anguish which followed a discovery so humiliating, in the bosom of one so sensible to the purity of the family name and honor—all combined to confound equally his feelings and his judgment. But his reply was not the less prompt for all this.

“And him, thus known, I doubly scorn, defy and spit upon!”

He had not time for more. Other passions were in exercise beside his own; and Edward Conway was taught to know, by what ensued, if the truth were unknown to him before, that it is always a far less difficult task to provoke, than to quiet, frenzy—to stimulate, than to subdue, the ferocity of human passions, when at the flood. A fool may set the wisest by the ears, but it is not the wisest always who can restore them to their former condition of sanity and repose. The congratulations of Muggs, the landlord, which, by the way, spoke something in his behalf, promised for a while to be without sufficient reason.

The captain of the Black Riders met with unexpected resistance among his troop. The murdered man had been a favorite, and they were not apt to be scrupulous about avenging the

death of such among their comrades as were. Even at a time when a moderate degree of reason prevailed among them, it was not easy to subdue them to placability and forbearance in regard to a prisoner; the very name of whom, according to their usual practice, was synonymous with victim. How much less so, at this juncture, when, with their blood roused to tiger rage, they had been suffered to proceed to the very verge of indulgence, before any effort, worthy of the name, on the part of an acknowledged superior, had been made to arrest them!

Edward Morton felt his error, in delaying his interposition so long. If his purpose had been to save, his effort should have been sooner made, and then it might have been effected without the more serious risk which now threatened himself, in the probable diminution of his authority. He estimated his power too highly, and flattered himself that he could at any moment interpose with effect. He made no allowance for that momentum of blood, which, in the man aroused by passion and goaded to fury, resists even the desires of the mind accustomed to control it; even as the wild beast, after he has lashed himself into rage, forgets the keeper by whom he is fed and disciplined, and rends him with the rest.

Edward Morton stood erect and frowning among those whom he was accustomed to command—and their obedience was withheld! His orders were received with murmurs by some—with sullenness by all. They still maintained their position—their hands and weapons uplifted—their eyes glaring with savage determination;—now fixed on their threatened victim, and now on their commander; and without much difference in their expression when surveying either.

“Do ye murmur—are ye mutinous? Ha! will ye have me strike, men, that ye fall not back? Is it you, Barton, and you, Fisher. You, of all, that stand up in resistance to my will! Ensign Darcy, it will best become you to give me your prompt obedience. I have not forgotten your connection with Lieutenant Stockton. Fall back, sir—do not provoke me to anger: do not any of you provoke me too far!”

The man addressed as Barton—a huge fellow who made himself conspicuous by his clamors from the first—replied in

a style which revealed to Morton the full difficulties of his position.

“Look you, Captain Morton, I’m one that is always for obedience when the thing’s reasonable; but here’s a case where it’s unreasonable quite. We ain’t used to see one of us shot down without so much as drawing blood for it. Ben Williams was my friend; and, for that matter, he was a friend with every fellow of the troop. I, for one, can’t stand looking at his blood, right afore me, and see his enemy standing t’other side, without so much as a scratch. As for the obedience, Captain, why there’s time enough for that when we’ve done hanging the rebel.”

“It must be now, Mr. Barton. Muggs, that pistol! Stand by me with your weapon. Men, I make you one appeal! I am your captain! All who are still willing that I should be so, will follow Muggs. Muggs—behind me. March! By the God of Heaven, Mr. Barton, this moment tries our strength. You or I must yield. There is but a straw between us. There is but a moment of time for either! Lower your weapon, sir, or one of us, in another instant, lies with Ben Williams.”

The huge horseman’s pistol which Muggs handed to his leader at his requisition, had been already cocked by the landlord. It was lifted while Morton was speaking—deliberately lifted—and the broad muzzle was made to rest full against the face of the refractory subordinate. The instant was full of doubt and peril, and Clarence Conway forgot for the time his own danger in the contemplation of the issue.

But the courage of the moral man prevailed over the instinct of blood. Edward Morton saw that he was about to triumph. The eye of the fierce mutineer sunk beneath his own, though its angry fires were by no means quenched. It still gleaned with defiance and rage, but no longer with resolution. The fellow looked round upon his comrades. They had shrunk back—they were no longer at his side; and no small number had followed the landlord and were now ranged on the side of their captain. Of those who had not taken this decided movement, he saw the irresoluteness, and his own purpose was necessarily strengthened. It is this dependence upon sympathy and association which constitutes one of the essential differences between the

vulgar and the educated mind. Brutal and bold as he was, Barton was not willing to be left alone. The chief of the Black Riders saw that the trial was fairly over—the strife had passed. The evil spirit was laid for the present, and there was no longer anything to fear.

“Enough!” he exclaimed, lowering his weapon, and acting with a better policy than had altogether governed his previous movements.

“Enough! You know me, Barton, and I think I know you. You are a good fellow at certain seasons, but you have your blasts and your hurricanes, and do not always know when to leave off the uproar. You will grow wiser, I trust; but, meanwhile, you must make some effort to keep your passions in order. This rough treatment of your friends, as if they were foes, won’t answer. Beware. You have your warning.”

“Yes,” growled the ruffian, doggedly, still unwilling altogether to submit; “but when our friends stand up for our foes, and take sides against us, I think it’s reasonable enough to think there’s not much difference between ’em, as you say. I’m done, but I think it’s mighty hard now-a-days that we can’t hang a rebel and a spy, without being in danger of swallowing a bullet ourselves. And then, too, poor Ben Williams! Is he to lie there in his blood, and nothing to be done to his enemy?”

“I say not that, Mr. Barton. The prisoner shall have a trial; and if you find him guilty of connection with the man who shot Williams, you may then do as you please. I have no disposition to deprive you of your victim; but know from me, that, while I command you, you shall obey me—ay, without asking the why and wherefore! I should be a sorry captain—nay, you would be a sorry troop—if I suffered your insubordination for an instant. Away, now, and make the circuit—all of you but Shumway and Irby. See to your powder, that it be kept dry; and let your horses be in readiness for a start at dawn. This country is too hot for you already; and with such management as you have had in my absence, it would become seven times hotter. Away.”

They disappeared, all but the two who were excepted by name. To these he delivered the prisoner.

“Shumway, do you and Irby take charge of the rebel. Lodge him in the block, and let him be safely kept till I relieve you. Your lives shall answer for his safety. Spare none who seek to thwart you. Were he the best man in the troop, who approached you suspiciously, shoot him down like a dog.”

In silence the two led Clarence Conway out of the house. He followed them in equal silence. He looked once toward his kinsman, but Edward Morton was not yet prepared to meet his glance. His head was averted, as the former was followed by his guards to the entrance. Clarence was conducted to an out-house—a simple but close block-house, of squared logs—small, and of little use as a prison, except as it was secluded from the highway. Its value, as a place of safekeeping, consisted simply in its obscurity. Into this he was thrust headlong, and the door fastened from without upon him. There let us leave him for a while, to meditate upon the strange and sorrowful scene which he had witnessed, and of which he had been a part.

His reflections were not of a nature to permit him to pay much attention to the accommodations which were afforded him. He found himself in utter darkness, and the inability to employ his eyes led necessarily to the greater exercise of his thoughts. He threw himself upon the floor of his dungeon, which was covered with pine-straw, and brooded over the prospects of that life which had just passed through an ordeal so narrow. Let us now return to his kinsman.

Edward Morton had now resumed all the duties of his station as chief of the Black Riders. In this capacity, and just at this time, his tasks, as the reader will readily imagine, were neither few in number nor easy of performance. It required no small amount of firmness, forethought, and adroitness, to keep in subjection, and govern to advantage, such unruly spirits. But the skill of their captain was not inconsiderable, and such were the very spirits whom he could most successfully command. The coarser desires of the mind, and the wilder passions of the man, he could better comprehend than any other. With these he was at home. But with these his capacity was at an end. Beyond these, and with finer spirits, he was usually at fault.

To be the successful leader of ruffians is perhaps a small

merit. It requires cunning, rather than wisdom, to be able simply to discover the passion which it seeks to use; and this was the chief secret of Edward Morton. He knew how to make hate, and jealousy, and lust, and fear, subservient to his purposes, already roused into action. It is doubtful, even, whether he possessed the cold-blooded talent of Iago, to awaken them from their slumbers, breathe into them the breath of life, and send them forward, commissioned like so many furies, for the destruction of their wretched victim. A sample has been given already of the sort of trial which awaited him in the control of his comrades.

But there were other difficulties which tasked his powers to the utmost. The difficulties which environed the whole British army were such as necessarily troubled, in a far greater degree, its subordinate commands. The duties of these were more constant, more arduous, and liable to more various risk and exposure. The unwonted successes of the American arms had awakened all the slumbering patriotism of the people; while the excesses of which such parties as that which Morton commanded had been guilty, in the hey-day of their reckless career, had roused passions in the bosom of their foes, which, if better justified, were equally violent, and far less likely, once awakened, to relapse into slumber. Revenge was busy with all her train in search of Morton himself, and the gloomily-caparisoned troop which he led. It was her array from which he so narrowly escaped when he received the timely succor of his kinsman in the swamp. A hundred small bodies like his own had suddenly started into existence and activity around him, some of which had almost specially devoted themselves to the destruction of his troop. The wrongs of lust, and murder, and spoliation, were about to be redressed; and by night, as by day, was he required to keep his troop in motion, if for no other object than his own safety; though, by this necessity, he was compelled to traverse a country which had been devastated by the wanton hands of those whom he commanded. On the same track, and because of the same provocation, were scattered hundreds of enemies, as active in pursuit and search as he was in evasion. He well knew the fate which awaited him if caught

and involuntarily shuddered as he thought of it: death in its most painful form; torture fashioned by the most capricious exercise of ingenuity; scorn, ignominy, and contumely, the most bitter and degrading, which stops not even at the gallows, and, as far as it may, stamps the sign of infamy upon the grave.

These were, in part, the subject of the gloomy meditations of the outlawed chief when left alone in the wigwam of Muggs, the landlord. True, he was not without his resources—his disguises—his genius! He had been so far wonderfully favored by fortune, and his hope was an active, inherent principle in his organization. But the resources of genius avail not always, and even the sanguine temperament of Edward Morton was disposed to reserve, while listening to the promises of fortune. He knew the characteristic caprices in which she was accustomed to indulge. He was no blind believer in her books. He was too selfish a man to trust her implicitly; though, hitherto, she had fulfilled every promise that she had ever made.

The signs of a change were now becoming visible to his senses. He had his doubts and misgivings; he was not without audacity—he could dare with the boldest; but his daring had usually been shown at periods, when to dare was to be cautious. He meditated, even now, to distrust the smiles of fortune in season—to leave the field of adventure while it was still possible and safe to do so.

His meditations were interrupted at this moment, and, perhaps, assisted, by no less a person than Muggs, the landlord. He made his appearance, after a brief visit to an inner shanty—a place of peculiar privacy—the sanctum sanctorum—in which the landlord wisely put away from sight such stores as he wished to preserve from that maelstrom, the common maw. The landlord was one of the few who knew the secret history of the two Conways; and, though he knew not all, he knew enough to form a tolerably just idea of the feelings with which the elder regarded the younger kinsman. He could form a notion, also, of the sentiments by which they were requited. In Muggs, Edward Morton had reason to believe that he had a sure friend—one before whom he might safely venture to unbosom some of his reserves. Still, he was especially careful to show

not all, nor the most important—none, in fact, the revelation of which could possibly be productive of any very serious injury or inconvenience. He, perhaps, did little more than stimulate the communicative disposition of “mine host,” who, like most persons of his craft, was garrulous by profession, and fancied that he never ministered perfectly to the palates of his guests, unless when he accompanied the service by a free exercise of his own tongue.

“Well, cappin, the game of fox and goose is finished now, I reckon. There’s no chance to play possum with your brother any longer. It’s lion and tiger now, if anything.”

“I suppose so,” replied the other, with something of a sigh. The landlord continued:—

“The question now, I reckon—now, that you’ve got him in your clutches—is what you’re to do with him. To my thinking, it’s jest the sort of question that bothered the man when he shook hands with the black bear round the tree. It was a starve to hold on and a squeeze to let go, and danger to the mortal ribs whichever way he took it.”

“You have described the difficulty, Muggs,” said the other, musingly—“what to do with him is the question.”

“There’s no keeping him here, that’s cl’ar.”

“No. That’s impossible!”

“His friends, I reckon, are nigh enough to get him out of the logbox, and it’s cl’ar they know where to find him. That shot that tumbled poor Williams was mighty nigh and mighty sudden, and was sent by a bold fellow. I’m onsatisfied but there was more than one.”

“No—but one,” said Morton—“but one!”

“Well, cappin, how do you count? There wa’n’t no track to show a body where to look for him. The wash made the airth smooth again in five shakes after the foot left the print.”

“It’s guesswork with me only, Muggs.”

“And who do you guess ’twas, cappin?”

“Supple Jack!”

“Well, I reckon you’re on the right trail. It’s reasonable enough. I didn’t once think of him. But it’s cl’ar enough to everybody that knows the man, that Supple Jack’s jist the lad

to take any risk for a person he loves so well. But, you don't think he come alone? I'm dub'ous the whole troop ain't mighty fur off."

"But him, Muggs! He probably came alone. We left him, only an hour before I came, on the edge of the Wateree—a few miles above this. He and Clarence gave me shelter in the swamp when I was chased by Butler's men, and when that skulking scoundrel, Stockton, left me to perish. Clarence rode on with me, and left Supple Jack to return to the swamp, where they have a first rate hiding-place. I suspect he did not return, but followed us. But of this we may speak hereafter. The question is, what to do with the prisoner—this bear whom I have by the paws, and whom it is equally dangerous to keep and to let go."

"Well, that's what I call a tight truth; but it's a sort of satisfaction, cappin, that you've still got the tree a-tween you; and so you may stop a while to consider. Now I ain't altogether the person to say what's what, and how it's to be done; but if so be I can say anything to make your mind easy, cappin, you know I'm ready."

"Do so, Muggs: let me hear you," was the reply of the outlaw, with the musing manner of one who listens with his ears only, and is content to hear everything, if not challenged to find an answer.

"Well, cappin, I'm thinking jest now we're besot all round with troubles; and there's no telling which is biggest, closest, and ugliest—they're all big, and close, and ugly. As for hiding Clarence Conway here, now, or for a day more, that's onpossible. It's cl'ar he's got his friends on the track, one, mout be, a hundred; and they can soon muster enough to work him out of the timbers, if it's only by gnawing through with their teeth. Well, how are you to do then? Send him under guard to Camden? Why, it's a chance if all your troop can carry themselves there, without losing their best buttons by the way. It's a long road, and the rebels watch it as close as hawks do the farmyard in chicken season. That, now, is about the worst sign for the king's side that I've seed for a long spell of summers. It shows pretty cl'ar that we ain't so strong as we was a-thinking. The

wonder is, where these troopers come from ; and the worst wonder is, where they get their boldness. Once on a time, when Tarleton first begun to ride among us, it was more like a driving of deer than a fighting of men ; but it seems to me that the rebels have got to be the drivers, and o' late days they scamper us mightily. I see these things better than you, cappin, and, perhaps, better than the rebels themselves ; for I ain't in the thick. I'm jest like one that's a-standing on a high hill and looking down at the fighting when it's a-going on below. I tell you, cappin, the game's going agin the king's people. They're a-losing ground—these men's getting fewer and fewer every day, and jest so fast do I hear of a new gathering among the whigs. I tell you agin, cappin, you're besot with troubles."

"I know it, Muggs. Your account of the case is an accurate one. We are in a bad way."

"By jingo, you may say so, cappin. You are, as I may say, in a mighty bad way—a sort of confusturation, that it puzzles my old head more than I can tell rightly, to onbefluster. Then, as for the prisoner—"

"Ay, *that*, Muggs. Speak to *that*. What of him?—let me hear your advice about the prisoner. How is he to be disposed of?"

"Well now, cappin—there's a-many ways for doing that, but which is the right and proper one—and when it's done, will it sarve the purpose? I'm afeard not—I'm not knowing to any way how to fix it so as to please you. It's pretty sartain he's your enemy in war and your enemy in peace ; and if all things that's said be true, about him and Miss Flora, it don't seem to me that you'd ha' been any worse off—if so be your father had never given you this brother for a companion."

The outlaw chief looked up for the first time during the interview, and his eye, full of significance, encountered that of the landlord.

"Ay, Muggs, the gift was a fatal one to me. Better for me—far better—had he never seen the light ; or, seeing it, that some friendly foe had closed it from his eyes, while he—while we were both—in a state of innocence."

"Gad, captain, I was thinking at one time to-night that black

Barton would have done you a service like that; and I was a-thinking jest then, that you wa'n't unwilling. You kept so long quiet, that I was afeard you'd have forgotten the blood-kin, and let the boys had the game their own way."

"You were afraid of it, were you?" said Morton, his brow darkening as he spoke.

"Ay, that I was, mightly. When I thought of the temptations, you know;—Miss Flora and her property—and then the fine estates he got by his mother's side and all that was like to fall to you, if once he was out of the way—I begun to trimble—for I thought you couldn't stand the temptation. 'He's only to keep quiet now and say nothing, and see what he'll get for only looking on.' That was the thought that troubled me. I was afeard, as I tell you, that you'd forget blood-kin, and everything, when you come to consider the temptations."

The outlaw rose and strode the floor impatiently.

"No, no, Muggs; you had little cause to fear. He had just saved my life—sheltered me from my enemies—nay, would have yielded me his own commission as a protection, which he supposed would be effectual for his own or my safety. No, no! I could not suffer it. Yet, as you say, great, indeed, would have been the gain—great was the temptation."

"True, cappin, but what's the gain that a man gits by bloodying his hands agin natur'? Now, it's not onreasonable or on-natural, when you have tumbled an open enemy in a fair scratch, to see after his consarns, and empty his fob and pockets. But I don't think any good could come with the gain that's spotted with the blood of one's own brother—"

"He's but a half-brother, Muggs," said Morton, hastily. "Different mothers, you recollect."

"Well, I don't see that there's a much difference, cappin. He's a full brother by your father's side."

"Yes, yes!—but Muggs, had he been slain by Barton and the rest, the deed would have been none of mine. It was a chance of war, and he's a soldier."

"Well, cappin, I'm not so certain about that. There's a difference I know, but—"

"It matters not! He lives? He is spared, Muggs—spared,

perhaps, for the destruction of his preserver. I have saved his life; but he knows my secret. That secret!—That fatal secret! Would to God!—”

He broke off the exclamation abruptly, while he struck his head with his open palm.

“My brain is sadly addled, Muggs. Give me something—something which will settle it and compose my nerves. You are happy, old fellow—you are happy, and—safe! The rebels have forgiven you—have they not?”

“Well, we have forgiven each other, cappin, and I have found them better fellows nigh, than they war at a distance;” replied the landlord, while he concocted for the outlaw a strong draught of punch, the favorite beverage of the time and country.

“If I ain’t happy, cappin, it’s nobody’s fault but my own. I only wish you were as safe, with all your gettings, as I think myself with mine; and you mought be, cappin;—you mought.”

A look of much significance concluded the sentence.

“How—what would you say, Muggs?” demanded the outlaw, with some increase of anxiety in his manner.

The reply of the landlord was whispered in his ears.

“Would to heaven I could!—but how?—How, Muggs, is this to be done?”

The answer was again whispered.

“No, no!” replied the other, with a heavy shake of the head. “I would not, and I dare not. They have stood by me without fear or faithlessness, and I will not now desert them. But enough of this for the present. Get me your lantern, while I seek this brother of mine in private. There must be some more last words between us.”

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRUE ISSUE.

PRECEDED by the landlord Muggs, who carried a dark lantern, Morton took his way to the secluded block-house in which his kinsman was a prisoner. The only entrance to this rude fabric was closely watched by the two persons to whom Clarence was given in charge. These found shelter beneath a couple of gigantic oaks which stood a little distance apart from one another, yet sufficiently nigh to the block-house to enable the persons in their shadow, while themselves perfectly concealed, to note the approach of any intruder. Dismissing them to the tavern, the chief of the Black Riders assigned to Muggs the duty of the watch, and having given him all necessary instructions, he entered the prison, the door of which was carefully fastened behind him by the obedient landlord.

The lantern which he bore, and which he set down in one corner of the apartment, enabled Clarence to distinguish his brother at a glance; but the youth neither stirred nor spoke as he beheld him. His mind, in the brief interval which had elapsed after their violent separation in the tavern, had been busily engaged in arriving at that stage of stern resignation, which left him comparatively indifferent to any evils which might then occur. Unable to form any judgment upon the course of his brother's future conduct, he was not prepared to say how far he might be willing to go—and how soon—in permitting to his sanguinary troop the indulgence of their bloody will. Wisely, then, he had steeled his mind against the worst, resolved, if he had suffer death in an obscurity so little desired by the youthful and ambitious heart, to meet its bitter edge with as calm a countenance as he should like to display, under a similar trial, in the presence of a thousand spectators.

Edward Morton had evidently made great efforts to work his

mind up to a similar feeling of stern indifference; but he had not been so successful, although, at the moment, untroubled by any of those apprehensions which were sufficiently natural to the situation of his brother. His face might have been seen to vary in color and expression as his eye turned upon the spot where Clarence was sitting. The moral strength was wanting in his case which sustained the latter. The consciousness of guilt enfeebled, in some degree, a spirit, whose intense selfishness alone—were he unpossessed of any other more decisive characteristics—must have been the source of no small amount of firmness and courage. As if ashamed, however, of his feebleness, and determined to brave the virtue which he still felt himself compelled to respect, he opened the conference by a remark, the tone and tenor of which were intended to seem exulting and triumphant.

“So, Colonel Conway, you find your wisdom has been at fault. You little fancied that you were half so intimate with that fierce bandit—that renowned chieftain—of whom report speaks so loudly. It does not need that I should introduce you formally to the captain of the Black Riders of Congaree.”

The youth looked up, and fixed his eye steadily on that of the speaker. Severe, indeed, but full of a manly sorrow, was the expression of that glance.

“Edward Conway,” he replied, after a brief delay, “you do not deceive me by that tone—nay, you do not deceive yourself. Your heart, instead of exultation, feels at this moment nothing but shame. Your eye gazes not steadily on mine. Your spirit is not that of a fearless man. You shrink, Edward Conway, in spite of your assumed boldness, with all the cowardice of a guilty soul.”

“Cowardice!—do you charge *me* with cowardice?”

“Ay, what else than cowardice has made you descend to the subterfuge and the trick—to the base disguise and the baser falsehood? These, too, to your brother, even at the moment when he was risking his own life to rescue that which you have dishonored for ever.”

“I will prove to you, in due season, that I am no coward, Clarence Conway,” replied the other, in hoarse and nearly un-

distinguishable accents; "you, at least, are seeking to convince me that you are none, in thus bearding the lion in his den."

"The lion! Shame not that noble beast by any such comparison. The fox will better suit your purpose and performance."

With a strong effort the outlaw kept down his temper, while he replied—

"I will not suffer you to provoke me, Clarence Conway. I have sought you for a single object, and that I will perform. After that—that over—and the provocation shall be met and welcomed. Now!—"

The other fiercely interrupted him, as he exclaimed—

"Now be it, if you will! Free my hands—cut asunder these degrading bonds which you have fixed upon the arms whose last offices were employed in freeing yours, and in your defence—and here, in this dungeon, breast to breast, let us carry out that strife to its fit completion, which your evil passion; your cupidity or hate, have so dishonestly begun. I know not, Edward Conway, what perversity of heart has brought you to this wretched condition—to the desertion of your friends—your country—the just standards of humanity—the noble exactions of truth. You have allied yourself to the worst of ruffians, in the worst of practices, without even the apology of that worst of causes which the ordinary tory pleads in his defence. You can not say that your loyalty to the king prompts you to the side you have taken, for I myself have heard you declare against him a thousand times; unless, indeed, I am to understand that even ere we left the hearth and burial-place of our father, you had begun that career of falsehood in which you have shown yourself so proficient. But I seek not for the causes of your present state; for the wrongs and the dishonor done me. If you be not utterly destitute of manhood, cut these bonds, and let the issue for life and death between us determine which is right."

"There! You have your wish, Clarence Conway." And, as he spoke, he separated the cords with his hunting-knife, and the partisan extended his limbs in all the delightful consciousness of recovered freedom.

"You are so far free, Clarence Conway!—your limbs are un

bound, but you are unarmed. I restore you the weapon with which you this day provided me. It would now be easy for you to take the life of him whom you so bitterly denounce. I have no weapon to defend myself; my bosom is without defence."

"What mean you? Think you that I would rush on you unarmed—that I seek unfair advantage?"

"No, Clarence; for your own sake and safety, I would not fight you now."

"Why for my safety?" demanded the partisan.

"For the best of reasons. Were you to succeed in taking my life, it would avail you nothing, and your own would be forfeit. You could not escape from this place, and fifty weapons would be ready to avenge my death."

"Why, then, this mockery—this cutting loose my bonds—this providing me with weapons?" demanded Clarence.

"You shall see. You know not yet my desire. Hear me. My purpose is to acquit myself wholly of the debt I owe you, so that, when we do meet, there shall be nothing to enfeeble either of our arms, or diminish their proper execution. Once to-night I have saved you, even at the peril of my own life, from the fury of my followers. I have already severed your bonds. I have restored your weapon, and before the dawn of another day, the fleet limbs of your own charger shall secure your freedom. This done, Clarence Conway, I shall feel myself acquitted of all those burdensome obligations which, hitherto, have made me suppress the natural feelings of my heart—the objects of my mind—the purposes of interest, ambition, love—all of which depend upon your life. So long as you live, I live not—so long as you breathe, my breath is drawn with doubt, difficulty, and in danger. Your life has been in my hands, but I could not take it while I was indebted to you for my own. By to-morrow's dawn I shall be acquitted of the debt—I shall have given you life for life, and liberty for liberty. After that, when we next meet, my gifts shall be scorn for scorn and blow for blow. You have my purpose."

Clarence Conway heard him with patience, but with mixed feelings. He was about to reply in a similar spirit, but a nobler sentiment arose in his bosom with the momentary pause which

he allowed himself for thought. He kept down the gushing blood which was about to pour itself forth in defiance from his laboring breast, and spoke as follows—

“I will not say, Edward Conway, what I might safely declare of my own indifference to your threats. Nay, were I to obey the impulses which are now striving within me for utterance, I should rather declare how happy it would make me were the hour of that struggle arrived. But there are reasons that speak loudly against the wish. For your sake, for our father’s sake, Edward Conway, I would pray that we might never meet again.”

“Pshaw! these are whining follies!—the cant of the girl or the puritan. They do not impose on *me*. Your father’s sake and mine, indeed! Say nothing for yourself—for your own sake—oh, no! no! you have no considerations of self—none! Philanthropic, patriotic gentleman!”

The keen eye of Clarence flashed angrily as he listened to this sneer. He bit his lip to restrain his emotion, and once more replied, but it was no longer in the language of forbearance.

“I am not unwilling to say, for *my* sake also, Edward Conway. Even to you I need not add, that no mean sentiment of fear governs me in the expression. Fear I have of no man. Fear of you, Edward Conway—you, in your present degraded attitude and base condition—the leagued with ruffians and common stabbers—a traitor and a liar!—Fear of *you* I could not have! Nor do you need that I should tell you this. You feel it in your secret soul. You know that I never feared you in boyhood, and can not fear you now. My frequent experience of your powers and my own, makes me as careless of your threats, as that natural courage, which belongs to my blood and mind, makes me insensible to the threats of others. Go to—you can not bully me. I scorn—I utterly despise you.”

“Enough, enough, Colonel Conway. We understand each other,” cried the outlaw, almost convulsed with his emotions. “We are quits from this hour. Henceforward I fling the ties of blood to the winds. As I do not feel them, I will not affect them. I acknowledge them no more. I am not your father’s son—not your brother. I forswear, and from this moment I shall for ever deny the connection. I have no share in the base

puddle which fills your veins. Know me, henceforth, for a nobler spirit. I glory in the name which scares your puny squadrons. I am the chief of the Black Riders of Congaree—that fell banditti which makes your women shiver and your warriors fly—upon whom you invoke and threaten vengeance equally in vain. I care not to be distinguished by any other name or connection. You, I shall only know as one to whom I am pledged for battle, and whom I am sworn to destroy. You know not, forsooth, what has driven me to this position! I will tell you here, once for all; and the answer, I trust, will conclude your doubts for ever. Hate for *you*—for *you* only! I hated you from your cradle, with an instinct which boyhood hourly strengthened, and manhood rendered invincible. I shall always hate you; and if I have temporized heretofore, and forborne the declaration of the truth, it was only the more effectually to serve and promote purposes which were necessary to that hate. That time, and the necessity of forbearance, are at an end. I can speak, and speak freely, the full feeling of my soul. Accident has revealed to you what, perhaps, I should have wished for a while longer to withhold; but that known, it is now my pride to have no further concealments. I repeat, therefore, that I loathe you from my soul, Clarence Conway; and when I have fairly acquitted myself of the debt I owe you, by sending you to your swamp in safety, I shall then seek, by every effort, to overcome and destroy you. Do you hear me?—am I at last understood?”

“I hear you,” replied Clarence Conway, with a tone calm, composed even; and with looks unmoved, and even sternly contemptuous. “I hear you. Your violence does not alarm me, Edward Conway. I look upon you as a madman. As for your threats—pshaw, man! You almost move me to deal in clamors like your own. Let us vapor here no longer. I accept your terms. Give me my freedom, and set all your ruffians on the track. I make no promise—I utter no threat—but if I fail to take sweet revenge for the brutal outrages to which I have this night been subjected by you and your myrmidons, then may Heaven fail me in my dying hour!”

“We are pledged, Clarence Conway,” said the outlaw; “be-

fore daylight I will conduct you from this place. Your horse shall be restored to you. You shall be free. I then know you no more—I fling from me the name of kinsman.”

“Not more heartily than I. Black Rider, bandit, outlaw, or ruffian! I shall welcome you to the combat by any name sooner than that which my father has made sacred in my ears.”

Morton bestowed a single glance on the speaker, in which all the hellish hate spoke out which had so long been suppressed, yet working in his bosom. The latter met the glance with one more cool and steady, if far less full of malignity.

“Be it, then, as he wills it!” he exclaimed, when the outlaw had retired; “he shall find no foolish tenderness hereafter in my heart, working for his salvation! If we must meet—if he will force it upon me—then God have mercy upon us both, for *I* will have none! It is his own seeking. Let him abide it! And yet, would to God that this necessity might pass me by! Some other arm—some other weapon than mine—may do me justice, and acquit me of this cruel duty!”

Long and earnest that night was the prayer of Clarence, that he might be spared from that strife which, so far, threatened to be inevitable. Yet he made not this prayer because of any affection—which, under the circumstances, must have been equally misplaced and unnatural—which he bore his kinsman. They had never loved. The feelings of brotherhood had been unfelt by either. Their moods had been warring from the first—it does not need that we should inquire why. The sweet dependencies of mutual appeal and confidence were unknown to, and unexercised by, either; and, so far as their sympathies were interested, Clarence, like the other, would have felt no more scruple at encountering Edward Conway in battle, than in meeting any indifferent person, who was equally his own and the foe of his country.

But there was something shocking to the social sense, in such a conflict, which prompted the prayers of the youth that it might be averted; and this prayer, it may be added, was only made when the excitement which their conference had induced, was partly over. His prayer was one of reflection and the mind. His blood took no part in the entreaty. At moments, when

feeling, moved by memory, obtained the ascendancy—even while he strove in prayer—the boon which he implored was forgotten; and, rising from his knees, he thought of nothing but the sharp strife and the vengeance which it promised. Perhaps, indeed, this mood prevailed even after the supplication was ended. It mingled in with the feelings which followed it, and whenever they became excited, the revulsion ceased entirely, which a more deliberate thought of the subject necessarily occasioned. The passion of the gladiator was still warm, even after the prayer was ended of the Christian man.

CHAPTER XII.

THINGS IN EMBRYO.

EDWARD MORTON kept his promise. Before the dawn of the following day he released his kinsman from prison. He had previously sent his followers out of the way—all save the landlord, Muggs—who could scarcely be counted one of them—and some two or three more upon whom he thought he could rely. He was not without sufficient motive for this caution.—He had his apprehensions of that unruly and insubordinate spirit which they had already shown, and which, baffled of its expected victim, he reasonably believed might once more display itself in defiance. A strange idea of honor prompted him at all hazards to set free the person, the destruction of whom would have been to him a source of the greatest satisfaction. Contradictions of this sort are not uncommon among minds which have been subject to conflicting influences. It was not a principle, but pride, that moved him to this magnanimity. Even Edward Conway, boasting of his connection with the most atrocious ruffians, would have felt a sense of shame to have acted otherwise.

The noble animal which Clarence rode was restored to him at his departure. Morton, also mounted, accompanied him in silence, for a mile beyond the secluded spot which the robbers

had chosen for their temporary refuge. He then spoke at parting.

“Colonel Conway, your path is free, and you are also! Before you lies the road to the Wateree, with which you are sufficiently acquainted. Here we separate. I have fulfilled my pledges. When next we meet I shall remind you of yours. Till then, farewell.”

He did not wait for an answer, but striking his rowel fiercely into the flanks of his horse, he galloped rapidly back to the place which he had left. The eye of Clarence followed him with an expression of stern defiance, not unmingled with sadness, while he replied:—

“I will not fail thee, be that meeting when it may. Sad as the necessity is, I will not shrink from it. I, too, have my wrongs to avenge, Edward Conway. I, too, acknowledge that instinct of hate from the beginning, which will make a labor of love of this work of vengeance. I have striven, but fruitlessly, for its suppression;—now let it have its way. The hand of fate is in it. We have never loved each other. We have both equally doubted, distrusted, disliked—and these instincts have strengthened with our strength, grown with our growth, and their fruits are here! Shall I, alone, regret them? Shall they revolt my feelings only? No! I have certainly no fear—I shall endeavor to free myself from all compunction! Let the strife come when it may, be sure I shall be last to say, ‘Hold off—are we not brethren?’ You fling away the ties of blood, do you? Know from me, Edward Conway, that in flinging away these ties, you fling from you your only security. They have often protected you from my anger before—they shall protect you no longer.”

And slowly, and solemnly, while the youth spoke, did he wave his open palm toward the path taken by his brother. But he wasted no more time in soliloquy. Prudence prompted him, without delay, to avail himself of the freedom which had been given him. He knew not what pursuers might be upon his path. He was not satisfied that his kinsman would still be true, without evasion, to the assurances which he had given in a mood of unwonted magnanimity. He plied his spurs freely

therefore, and his steed acknowledged the governing impulse. Another moment found him pressing toward the swamp.

But he had scarcely commenced his progress, when a well-known voice reached his ears, in a friendly summons to stop; while on one hand, emerging from the forest, came riding out his faithful friend and adherent, Jack Bannister.

“Ah, true and trusty, Jack. Ever watchful. Ever mindful of your friend—worth a thousand friends—I might well have looked to see you as nigh to me in danger as possible. I owe you much, Jack—very much. It was you, then, as I thought, whose rifle——”

“Worked that chap’s buttonhole,” was the answer of the woodman, with a chuckle, as shaking aloft the long ungainly but unerring instrument, with one hand, he grasped with the other the extended hand of his superior.

“I couldn’t stand to see the fellow handle you roughly, Clarence. It made the gall bile up within me; and though I knowed that ’twould bring the whole pack out upon me, and was mighty dub’ous that it would make the matter worse for you; yet I couldn’t work it out no other way. I thought you was gone for good and all, and that made me sort of desp’rate. I didn’t pretty much know what I was a-doing, and, it mought be, that Polly Longlips” (here he patted the rifle affectionately) “went off herself, for I don’t think I sighted her. If I had, Clarence, I don’t think the drop would ha’ been on the button of him that tumbled. I’m a thinking ’twould ha’ drawn blood that was a mighty sight more nigh to your’n, if there was any good reason that your father had for giving Edward Conway the name he goes by. I suppose, Clarence, you’re pretty nigh certain now that he’s no ra’al, proper kin of your’n, for you to be keeping him out of harm’s way, and getting into it yourself on account of him.

“And yet, he saved me from those ruffians, Jack.”

“Dog’s meat! Clarence, and what of that? Wa’n’t it him that got you into their gripe; and wouldn’t he ha’ been worse than any sarpent that ever carried p’ison at the root of his upper jaw, if he hadn’t ha’ saved you, after what you’d done for him jest afore? Don’t talk to me of his saving you, Clar-

ence—don't say anything more in his favor, or I'll stuff my ears with moss and pine gum whenever you open your lips to speak. You've stood by him long enough, and done all that natur' called for, and more than was natral. Half the men I know, if they had ever been saved by any brother, as you've been saved by him, would ha' sunk a tooth into his heart that wouldn't ha' worked its way out in one winter, no how. But you've done with him now, I reckon; and if you ain't, I'm done with you. There'll be no use for us to travel together, if you ain't ready to use your knife agen Edward Conway the same as agin any other tory."

"Be satisfied, Jack. I'm sworn to it—nay, pledged to him by oath—when we next meet to make our battle final. It was on this condition that he set me free."

"Well, he's not so mean a skunk after all, if he's ready to fight it out. I didn't think he was bold enough for that. But it's all the better. I only hope that when the time comes, I'll be the one to see fair play. I'll stand beside you, and if he flattens you—which, God knows, I don't think it's in one of his inches to do—why, he'll only have to flatten another. It's cl'ar to you now, Clarence, that you knows all about him."

"Yes! He is the leader of the Black Riders. He declared it with his own lips."

"When he couldn't help it no longer. Why, Clarence, he 'twas, that sent them fellows a'ter you that tuk you. I didn't see it, but I knows it jest the same as if I did. But, though you know that he's a tory and a Black Rider, there's a thousand villanies he's been doing, ever since we played together, that you know nothing about; and I'm 'minded of one in preticular that happened when you was at college in England, by the coming of old Jake Clarkson!--You 'member Jake Clarkson, that planted a short mile from your father's place, don't you?—he had a small patch of farm, and did boating along the river, like myself."

"Yes, very well—I remember him."

"Well, him I mean. Old Jake had a daughter—I reckon you don't much remember her, Mary Clarkson—as spry and sweet a gal as ever man set eyes on. I had a liking for the gal

—I own it, Clarence—and if so be things hadn't turned out as they did, I mought ha' married her. But it's a God's blessing I didn't; for you see Edward Conway got the better of her, and 'fore Jake know'd anything about it, poor Mary was a-carrying a bundle she had no law to carry. When they pushed the gal about it, she confessed 'twas Edward Conway's doings; and she told a long gal's story how Edward had promised to marry her, and swore it on Holy Book, and all that sort of thing, which was pretty much out of reason and nater—not for him to speak it, but for her to be such a child as to believe it. But no matter. The stir was mighty great about it. Old Jake carried a rifle more than three months for Edward Conway, and he took that time to make his first trip to Florida; where, I'm thinking, bad as he was before, he larn'd to be a great deal worse. It was there that he picked up all his tory notions from having too much dealing with John Stuart, the Indian agent, who, you know, is jist as bad an inimy of our liberties as ever come out of the old country. Well, but the worst is yet to tell. Poor Mary couldn't stand the desartion of Edward Conway and the diskivery of her sitation. Beside, old Jake was too rough for the poor child, who, you know, Clarence, was a'most to be pitied; for it's mighty few women in this world that can say no when they're axed for favors by a man they have a liking for. Old Jake was mighty cross; and Molly, his wife, who, by nature, was a she-tiger, she made her tongue wag night and day about the sad doing of the poor gal, 'till her heart was worn down in her bosom, and she didn't dare to look up, and trimbled whenever anybody came nigh to her, and got so wretched and scary at last, that she went off one night, nobody knows whar, and left no tracks. Well, there was another stir. We were all turned out on the sarch, and it was my misfortune, Clarence, to be the first to find out what had become of her. Dickens! it makes my eyes water to this day!"

"And where did you find her, Jack?"

"Didn't find her, Clarence; but found out the miserable end she made of herself. We found her bonnet and shawl on the banks of the river, but her body we couldn't git! The rocks at the bottom of the Congaree know all about it. I reckon."

“I have now a faint recollection of this story, Bannister. I must have heard it while in England, or soon after my return.”

“’Twas a bad business, Clarence; and I didn’t feel the smallest part of it. I didn’t know till I come across the gal’s bonnet how great a liking I had for her. I reckon I cried like a baby over it. From that day I mistrusted Edward Conway worse than p’ison. ’There was a-many things, long before that, that made me suspicion him; but after that, Clarence, I always felt when I was near him, as if I saw a great snake, a viper, or a mockasin, and looked all round for a chunk to mash its head with.”

“And what of her old father, Jack?”

“Why, he’s come up to join your troop. I was so full of thinking ’bout other matters yisterday, when I saw you, that I quite forgot to tell you. He’s been fighting below with Marion’s men, but he wanted to look at the old range, and so he broke off to go under Sumter;—but the true story is, I’m thinking, that he’s hearn how Edward Conway is up here somewhar, a-fighting, and he comes to empty that rifle at his head. He’ll say his prayers over the bullet that he uses at him, and I reckon will make a chop in it, so that he may know, when his inimy is tumbled, if the shot that does the business was the one that had a commission for it.”

“And Clarkson is now with us? In the swamp?”

“I left him at the ‘Big Crossings.’ But, Clarence, don’t you say nothing to him about this business. It’s a sore thing with him still, though the matter is so long gone by. But everything helps to keep it alive in his heart. His old woman’s gone to her long home; and though she had a rough tongue and a long one, yet he was usen to her; and, when he lost little Mary, and then her, and the tories burnt his house, it sort-a cut him up, root and branch, and made him fretful and vexatious. But he’ll fight, Clarence, like old blazes—there’s no mistake in him.”

“I will be careful, Jack; but a truce to this. We have but little time for old histories; and such melancholy ones as these may well be forgotten. We have enough before us sufficiently sad to demand all our attention and awaken our griefs. **T**e business now, Jack. We have idled long enough.”

“Ready, colonel. Say the word.”

“Take the back track, and see after these Black Riders. We are fairly pledged now to encounter them—to beat them—to make the cross in blood on the breast of the very best of them.”

“Edward Conway at the head of them!”

“Edward Conway no longer, John Bannister. He himself disclaims the name with scorn. Let him have the name, with the doom, which is due to the chief of the banditti which he leads. That name has saved him too long already. I rejoice that he now disclaims it, with all its securities. After him, John Bannister. If you have skill as a scout, use it now. After what has passed between us, he will be on my heels very shortly. He may be, even now, with all his hand. I must be prepared for him, and must distrust him. It is therefore of vast importance that all his movements should be known. To your discretion I leave it. Away. Find me in the swamp to-morrow at the Little Crossings. We must leave it for the Congarec in three days more. Away. Let your horse use his heels.”

A brief grasp of the hand, and a kind word, terminated the interview between the youthful partisan and his trusty follower. The latter dashed abruptly into the woods bordering the swamp, while the former, taking an upper route, pursued the windings of the river, till he reached the point he aimed at. We will not follow the course of either for the present, but return to the house of Muggs, and observe, somewhat further, the proceedings of the outlawed captain.

There, everything had the appearance of a rapid movement. The troopers, covered by a thick wood, were preparing to ride. Horses, ready caparisoned, were fastened beneath the trees, while their riders, singly or in groups, were seeking in various ways to while away the brief interval of time accorded them in the delay of their chief officer.

He, meanwhile, in the wigwam of Muggs, seemed oppressed by deliberations which baffled for the time his habitual activity. He sat upon the same bulk which he had occupied while a prisoner the night before, and appeared willing to surrender himself to that fit of abstraction which the landlord—though he watched it with manifest uneasiness—did not seem bold enough to inter-

rupt. At length the door of the apartment opened, and the presence of a third person put an end to the meditations of the one and the forbearance of the other party.

The intruder was a youth, apparently not more than seventeen years of age. Such would have been the impression on any mind, occasioned by his timid bearing and slender figure—indeed, he would have been called undersized for seventeen. But there was that in his pale, well-defined features, which spoke for a greater maturity of thought, if not of time, than belongs to this early period in life. The lines of his cheeks and mouth were full of intelligence—that intelligence which results from early anxieties and the pressure of serious necessities. The frank, free, heedless indifference of the future, which shines out in the countenance of boyhood, seemed utterly obliterated from his face. The brow was already touched with wrinkles, that appeared strangely at variance with the short, closely cropped black hair, the ends of which were apparent beneath the slouched cap of fur he wore. The features were pensive, rather pretty, indeed, but awfully pale. Though they expressed great intelligence and the presence of an active thought, yet this did not seem to have produced its usual result in conferring confidence. The look of the youth was downcast, and when his large dark eyes ventured to meet those of the speaker, they seemed to cower and to shrink within themselves; and this desire appeared to give them an unsteady, dancing motion, which became painful to the beholder, as it seemed to indicate apprehension, if not fright, in the proprietor. His voice faltered too when he spoke, and was only made intelligible by his evident effort at deliberateness.

Like that of the rest of the troop, the costume of the youth was black. A belt of black leather encircled his waist, in which pistols and a knife were ostentatiously stuck. Yet how should one so timid be expected to use them? Trembling in the presence of a friend, what firmness could he possess in the encounter with a foe? Where was the nerve, the strength, for the deadly issues of battle? It seemed, indeed, a mockery of fate—a cruelty—to send forth so feeble a frame and so fearful a spirit, while the thunder and the threatening storm were

in the sky. But no such scruples appeared to afflict the chief; nor did he seem to recognise the expression of timidity in the boy's features and manner of approach. Perhaps, he ascribed his emotions to the natural effect of his own stern manner, which was rather increased than softened as he listened to the assurance which the boy made that all was ready for a movement.

"You have lingered, boy!"

"Barton and the ensign were not with the rest, sir, and I had to look for them!"

"So!—plotting again, were they? But they shall find their match yet! Fools! Blind and deaf fools, that will not content themselves with being knaves to their own profit, but press on perversely as knaves, to their utter ruin. But go, boy—see that your own horse is ready; and hark ye, do not be following too closely at my heels. I have told you repeatedly, keep the rear when we are advancing, the front only when we are retreating. Remember."

The boy bowed respectfully, and left the room.

"And now, Muggs, you are bursting to speak. I know why, wherefore, and on what subject. Now, do you know that I have but to reveal to the troop the suggestion you made to me last night, to have them tear you and your house to pieces? Do you forget that desertion is death, according to your own pledges?"

"I am no longer one of the troop," replied the landlord hastily.

"Ay, that may be in one sense, but is scarcely so in any other. You are only so far released from your oath that no one expects you to do *active* duty. But, let them hear you speak, even of yourself, as last night you spoke to me, of *my* policy, and they will soon convince you that they hold you as fairly bound to them *now*, as you were when all your limbs were perfect. They will only release you by tearing what remains asunder."

"Well, but capping, suppose they would, as you say. There's no reason why they should know the advice I give to you; and there's no reason why you shouldn't take that advice. We're besot, as I said before, with dangers. There's Greene with his

army, a-gaining ground every day. There's Sumter, and Marion, and Pickens, and Maham, and——"

"Pshaw, Muggs! what a d—d catalogue is this; and what matters it all? Be it as you say—do I not know? Did I not know, at the beginning, of all these dangers? They do not terrify me now, any more than then! These armies that you speak of are mere skeletons."

"They give mighty hard knocks for skilitons. There's that affair at Hobkirk's——"

"Well, did not Rawdon keep the field?"

"Not over-long, cappin, and now——"

"Look you, Muggs, one word for all. I am sworn to the troop. I will keep my oath. They shall find no faltering in me. Living or dead, I stand by them to the last; and I give you these few words of counsel, if you would be safe. I will keep secret what you have said to me, for, I believe, you meant me kindly; but let me hear no more of the same sort of counsel. Another word to the same effect, and I deliver you over to the tender mercies of those with whom the shortest prayer is a span too long for an offender whose rope is ready and whose tree is near."

These words were just spoken as the boy reappeared at the door and informed the chief that the troop was in motion. The latter rose and prepared to follow. He shook hands with the landlord at parting, contenting himself with saying the single word, "Remember!"—in a tone of sufficient warning—in reply to the other's farewell. In this, Edward Morton displayed another sample of the practised hypocrisy of his character. His first mental soliloquy after leaving the landlord, was framed in such language as the following—

"I like your counsel, Master Muggs, but shall be no such fool as to put myself in your power by showing you that I like it. I were indeed a sodden ass, just at this moment, when half of my troop suspect me of treachery, to suffer you to hear, from my own lips, that I actually look with favor upon your counsel. Yet the old fool reasons rightly. This is no region for me now. It will not be much longer. The British power is passing away rapidly. Rawdon will not sustain himself much longer. Corn-

wallis felt that, and hence his pretended invasion of Virginia. Invasion, indeed!—a cover only to conceal his own flight. But what care I for him or them? My own game is of sufficient importance, and that is well nigh up. I deceived myself when I fancied that the rebels could not sustain themselves through the campaign; and if I wait to see the hunt up, I shall have a plentiful harvest from my own folly. No, no! I must get out of the scrape as well as I can, and with all possible speed. But no landlords for confidants. A wise man needs none of any kind. They are for your weak, dependent, adhesive people; folks who believe in friendships and loves, and that sort of thing. Loves! Have I, then, none—no loves? Ay, there are a thousand in that one. If I can win *her*, whether by fair word or fearless deed, well! It will not then be hard to break from these scoundrels. But, here they are!”

Such was the train of Edward Morton's thoughts as he left the landlord. Followed by the boy of whom we have already spoken, he cantered forth to the wood where the troop had formed, and surveyed them with a keen, searching, soldierly eye.

Morton was not without military ambition, and certainly possessed, like his brother, a considerable share of military talent. His glance expressed pleasure at the trim, excellent dress and aspect of his troop. Beyond this, and those common purposes of selfishness which had prompted the evil deeds, as well of men as leader, he had no sympathies with them. Even as he looked and smiled upon their array, the thought rapidly passed through his mind—

“Could I run their heads into the swamp now, and withdraw my own, it were no bad finish to a doubtful game. It must be tried; but I must use them something further. They can do good service yet, and no man should throw away his tools till his work is ended.”

Brief time was given to the examination. Then followed the instructions to his subordinates, which do not require that we should repeat them. The details that concern our narrative will develop themselves in proper order, and in due season. But we may mention, that the chief of the outlaws made his arrangements with some reference to the rumors of disaffection among

his men which had reached his ears. He took care to separate the suspected officers, in such a way as to deprive them, for the present, of all chance of communion; then, taking the advance, he led the troop forward, and was soon found pursuing the track lately taken by Clarence Conway.

CHAPTER XIII.

NEW PRINCIPLES DISCUSSED BY OLD LAWS.

THE last words of the chief of the Black Riders, as he left the presence of the landlord, had put that worthy into a most unenviable frame of mind. He had counselled Morton for his own benefit—he himself had no selfish considerations. He flattered himself that the relation in which he stood to the parties between which the country was divided, not to speak of his mutilated condition, would secure him from danger, no matter which of them should finally obtain the ascendancy. That he should be still held responsible to his late comrades, though he no longer engaged in their pursuits and no longer shared their spoils, was a medium equally new and disquieting through which he was required to regard the subject. The stern threat with which Morton concluded, left him in little doubt of the uncertain tenure of that security which he calculated to find among his old friends; and, at the same time, awakened in his heart some new and rather bitter feelings in reference to the speaker. Hitherto, from old affinities, and because of some one of those nameless moral attachments which incline us favorably to individuals to whom we otherwise owe nothing, he had been as well disposed toward Edward Morton as he could be toward any individual not absolutely bound to him by blood or interest. He had seen enough to like in him, to make him solicitous of his successes, and to lead him in repeated instances, as in that which incurred the late rebuke, to volunteer his suggestions, and to take some pains in acquiring information which sometimes

proved of essential benefit to the outlaw. It was partly in consequence of this interest, that he acquired that knowledge of the private concerns of Morton which prompted the latter, naturally enough, to confer with him, with tolerable freedom, on a number of topics strictly personal to himself, and of which the troop knew nothing. Conscious of no other motive than the good of the outlaw; and not dreaming of that profounder cunning of the latter, which could resolve him to adopt the counsel which he yet seemed to spurn with loathing, the landlord, reasonably enough, felt indignant at the language with which he had been addressed; and his indignation was not lessened by the disquieting doubts of his own safety which the threats of Morton had suggested. It was just at the moment when his conclusions were most unfavorable to the outlaw, that the door of his wigwam was quietly thrown open, and he beheld, with some surprise, the unexpected face of our worthy scout, Jack Bannister, peering in upon him. The latter needed no invitation to enter.

“Well, Isaac Muggs,” said he, as he closed and bolted the door behind him, “you’re without your company at last. I was a’most afear’d, for your sake in pretic’lar, that them bloody sculpers was a-going to take up lodging with you for good and all. I waited a pretty smart chance to see you cl’ar of them, and I only wish I was sartin, Muggs, that you was as glad as myself when they concluded to make a start of it.”

“Ahem!—To be sure I was, friend Supple,” replied the other with an extra show of satisfaction in his countenance which did not altogether conceal the evident hesitation of his first utterance.—“To be sure I was; they’d ha’ drunk me out of house and home if they had stopped much longer. A kag of lemons a’most—more than two kags of sugar, best Havana—and there’s no measuring the Jamaica, wasted upon them long swallows. Ef I a’n’t glad of their going, Jack, I have a most onnateral way of thinking on sich matters.”

The keen eyes of Supple Jack never once turned from the countenance of the landlord, as he detailed the evils of consumption among his guests; and when the latter had finished, he coolly replied:—

"I'm afear'd, Isaac Muggs, you ain't showing clean hands above the table. That's a sort of talking that don't blind my eyes, even ef it stops my ears. Don't I know it would be mighty onnateral if you wa'n't glad enough to sell your kags of lemons, and your kags of sugar, and your gallons of rum, pretic'larly when, in place of them, you can count me twenty times their valley in British gould? No, Muggs, that sort o' talking won't do for me. Take the cross out of your tongue and be pretic'lar in what you say, for I'm going to s'arch you mighty close this time, I tell you."

"Well but, Supple, you wouldn't have me take nothing from them that drinks and eats up my substance?"

"Who talks any sich foolishness but yourself, Muggs?—I don't. I'm for your taking all you can get out of the inimy; for it's two ways of distressing 'em, to sell 'em strong drink and take their gould for it. The man that drinks punch is always the worse for it; and it don't better his business to make him pay for it in guineas. That's not my meaning, Muggs. I'm on another track, and I'll show you both eends of it before I'm done."

"Why, Supple, you talks and looks at me suspiciously," said the landlord, unable to withstand the keen, inquiring glances of the scout, and almost as little able to conceal his apprehensions lest some serious discovery had been made to his detriment.

"Look you, Isaac Muggs, do you see that peep-hole there in the wall?—oh, thar! jest one side of the window—the peep-hole in the logs."

"Yes, I see it," said the landlord, whose busy fingers were already engaged in thrusting a wadding of dry moss into the discovered aperture.

"Well, it's too late to poke at it now, Muggs," said the other. "The harm's done a'ready, and I'll let you know the worst of it. Through that peep-hole, last night, I saw what was a-going on here among you; and through that peep-hole, it was this same Polly Longlips"—tapping his rifle as he spoke—"that went off of her own liking, and tumbled one big fellow; and was mighty vexatious, now, when she found herself onable to tumble another."

“Yes, yes—Polly Longlips was always a famous talker,” murmured the landlord flatteringly, and moving to take in his remaining hand the object of his eulogium. But Supple Jack evidently recoiled at so doubtful a liberty in such dangerous times, and drew the instrument more completely within the control of his own arm.

“She’s a good critter, Muggs, but is sort o’ bashful among strangers; and when she puts up her mouth, it ain’t to be kissed or to kiss, I tell you. She’s not like other gals in that pre-tic’lar. Now, don’t think I mistrust you, Muggs, for ’twould be mighty timorsome was I to be afeard of anything you could do with a rifle like her, having but one arm to go upon. It’s only a jealous way I have, that makes me like to keep my Polly out of the arms of any other man. It’s nateral enough, you know, to a person that loves his gal.”

“Oh yes, very nateral, Supple; but somehow, it seems to me as if you did suspicion me, Supple—it does, I declar’.”

“To be sure I do,” replied the other, promptly. “I snspicions you’ve been making a little bit of a fool of yourself; and I’ve come to show you which eend of the road will bring you np. You know, Muggs, that I know all about you—from A to izzard. I can read you like a book. I reckon you’ll allow that I have larn’d *that* lesson, if I never larn’d any other.”

“Well, Supple, I reckon I may say you know me pretty much as well as any other person.”

“Better—better, Muggs!—I know you from the jump; and I know what none of our boys know, that you did once ride with these Black—”

“Yes, Supple, but—” and the landlord jumped up and looked out of the door, and peered, with all his eyes, as far as possible into the surrounding wood. The scout, meanwhile, with imper-turbable composure, retained the seat which he had originally taken.

“Don’t you be scarey,” said he, when the other had returned, “I’ve sarcumvented your whole establishment—looked in at both of your blocks, and all of your cypress hollows, not to speak of a small ride I took after your friends—”

“No friends of mine, Supple, no more than any other people

that pay for what they git," exclaimed the apprehensive landlord.

"That's the very p'int I'm driving at, Muggs. You know well enough that if our boys had a guess that you ever rode with that 'ere troop, it wouldn't be your stump of an arm that 'd save you from the swinging limb."

"But I never did hide that I fou't on the British side, Supple!" said the other.

"In the West Indies, Isaac Muggs. That's the story you told about your hurts, and all that. If you was to tell them, or if I was to tell them, any other story now, that had the least smell of the truth in it, your shop would be shut up for ever in this life, and—who knows?—maybe never opened in the next. Well, now, I'm come here this blessed day to convert you to rebellion. Through that very peep-hole, last night, I heard you, with my own ears, talking jest as free as the rankest tory in all the Wateree country."

"Oh, Lord, Supple, wa'n't that nateral enough, when the house wor full of tories?"

"'Twa'n't nateral to an honest man at any time," replied the other indignantly; "and let me tell you, Muggs, the house wa'n't full—only Ned Conway was here, with his slippery tongue that's a wheedling you, like a blasted blind booby, Muggs, to your own destruction. That same fellow will put your neck in the noose yet, and laugh when you're going up."

A prediction so confidently spoken, and which tallied so admirably with the savage threat uttered by the outlaw at his late departure, drove the blood from the cheeks of the landlord, and made him heedless of the harsh language in which the scout had expressed himself. His apology was thus expressed:—

"But 'twas pretty much the same thing, Supple—he was their cappin, you know."

"Cappin! And what does he care about them, and what do they care about him, if they can get their eends sarved without each other? It wouldn't be a toss of a copper, the love that's atween them. He'll let them hang, and they'll hang him, as soon as it's worth while for either to do so. Don't I know, Muggs? Don't I know that they're conniving strong agin him

even now, and don't I calkilate that as soon as the Congaree country gits too hot to hold Rawdon, this Ned Conway will be the first to kill a colt to 'scape a halter? He'll ride a horse to death to get to Charleston, and when there, he'll sink a ship to git to the West Indies. He knows his game, and he'll so work it, Isaac Muggs, as to leave your neck in the collar without waiting to hear the crack."

"You're clean mistaken, Supple, for 'twas only this morning that I cautioned the captain 'bout his men, and I gin him my counsel to take the back track and find his way to the seaboard; but he swore he'd never desart the troop, and he spoke mighty cross to me about it, and even threatened, if I talked of it another time to him, to set the troopers on me."

"More knave he, and more fool you for your pains," said the other irreverently; "but this only makes me the more sartin that he means to finish a bad game by throwing up his hand. He's made his Jack, and he don't stop to count. But look you, Isaac Muggs, all this tells agin you. Here, you're so thick, hand and glove, with the chief of the Black Riders, that you're advising him what to do; and by your own words, he makes out that you're still liable to the laws of the troop. Eh? what do you say to that?"

"But that's only what *he said*, Supple, and it's what was a-worrying me when you come in."

"Look you, Muggs, it ought to worry you! I'm mighty serious in this business. I'm going to be mighty strick with you. I was the one that spoke for you among our boys, and 'twas only because I showed them that I had sort o' converted you from your evil ways, that they agreed to let you stay here in quiet on the Wateree. Well, I thought I *had* converted you. You remember that long summer day last August, when Polly Longlips gin a bowel-complaint to Macleod, the Scotch officer. You was with him in the boat, and helped to put him across the Wateree. Well, when we was a-burying him—for he died like a gentleman bred—I had a call to ax you sartin questions, and we had a long argyment about our liberties, and George the Third, and what business Parlyment had to block up Boston harbor, and put stamps on our tea before they let us drink it.

Do you remember all them matters and specifications, Isaac Muggs?"

"Well, Supple, I can't but say I do. We did have quite a long argyment when the lieutenant was a dying, and jest after the burial."

"No, 'twas all the while we was a-laying in the trench; for I recollect saying to you, when you was a pitying him all the time, that, ef I was sorry for the poor man's death, I wasn't sorry that I killed him, and I would shoot the very next one that come along, jest the same; for it made the gall bile up in me to see a man that I had never said a hard word to in all my life, come here, over the water, a matter, maybe, of a thousand miles, to force me, at the p'int of the bagnet, to drink stamped tea. I never did drink the tea, no how. For my own drinking, I wouldn't give one cup of coffee, well biled, for all the tea that was ever growed or planted. But, 'twas the freedom of the thing that I was argying for, and 'twas on the same argyment that I was willing to fight. Now that was the time, and them was the specifications which made us argyfy, and it was only then, when I thought I had converted you from your evil ways, that I tuk on me to answer for your good conduct to our boys. I spoke to the colonel for you, jest the same as ef I had know'd you for a hundred years. It's true I did know you, and the mother that bore you, and a mighty good sort of woman she was; but it was only after that argyment that I felt a call to speak in your behalf. Now, Isaac Muggs, I ain't conscience-free about that business. I've had my suspicions a long time that I spoke a leetle too much in your favor; and what I heard last night—and what I seed—makes me dub'ous that you've been a sort o' snake in the grass. I doubt your conversion, Isaac Muggs; but before I tell you my mind about the business, I'd jest like to hear from your own lips what you think about our argyment, and what you remember, and what you believe."

The landlord looked utterly bewildered. It was evident that he had never devoted much time to metaphysics; and the confusion and disorder of the few words which he employed in answer, and the utter consternation of his looks, amply assured the

inflexible scout that the labor of conversion must be entirely gone over again.

“ I see, Isaac Muggs, that you’re in a mighty bad fix, and it’s a question with me whether I ought raly to give you a helping hand to git out of it. Ef I thought you wanted to git at the truth—”

“ Well, Supple, as God’s my judge, I sartinly do.”

“ I’d go over the argyment agin for your sake; but—”

“ I’d thank you mightily, Supple.”

“ But ’twon’t do to go on forgetting, Muggs. The thing is to be onderstood, and if it’s once onderstood, it’s to be believed; and when you say you believe, there’s no dodging after that. There’s no saying you’re a tory with tories, and a whig with whigs, jest as it seems needful. The time’s come for every tub to stand on its own bottom, and them that don’t must have a turn—inside out! Now, there’s no axing you to fight for us, Muggs—that’s out of natur’—and I’m thinking we have more men now than we ean feed; but we want the truth in your soul, and we want you to stick to it. Ef you’re ready for that, and raly willing, I’ll put it to you in plain argyments that you ean’t miss, unless you want to miss ’em; and you’ll never dodge from ’em, if you have only half a good-sized man’s soul in you to go upon. You’ve only to say now, whether you’d like to know—”

The landlord cut short the speaker by declaring his anxiety to be re-enlightened, and Supple Jack rose to his task with all the ealm deliberation of a praetised lecturer. Coiling up a huge quid of tobacco in one jaw, to prevent its interfering with the argument, he went to the door.

“ I’ll jest go out for a bit and hitch ‘ Mossfoot,’ ”—the name conferred upon his pony, as every good hunter has a tender diminutive for the horse he rides and the gun he shoots—“ I’ll only go and hitch ‘ Mossfoot’ deeper in the swamp, and out of harm’s way for a spell, and then be back. It’s a three minutes’ business only.”

He was not long gone, but, during that time, rapid transitions of thought and purpose were passing through the mind of the veteran landlord. Circumstances had already prepared him to

recognise the force of many of the scout's arguments. The very counsel he had given to Edward Morton originated in a conviction that the British cause was going down—that the whigs were gaining ground upon the tories with every day's movement, and that it would be impossible for the latter much longer to maintain themselves. The policy of the publican usually goes with that of the rising party. He is not generally a bad political thermometer, and Muggs was a really good one. Besides, he had been stung by the contemptuous rejection of his counsel by the chief whom he was conscious of having served unselfishly, and alarmed by the threats which had followed his uncalled-for counsel.

The necessity of confirming his friends among the successful rebels grew singularly obvious to his intellect, if it had not been so before, in the brief absence of the scout; and when he returned, the rapidly quickening intelligence of the worthy landlord made the eyes of the former brighten with the satisfaction which a teacher must naturally feel at the wonderful progress and ready recognition of his doctrines.

These, it will not be necessary for us entirely, or even in part, to follow. The worthy woodman has already given us a sufficient sample of the sort of philosophy in which he dealt; and farther argument on the tyranny of forcing "stamped tea" down the people's throats, "will they, nill they," may surely be dispensed with. But, flattering as his success appeared to be at first, Supple Jack was soon annoyed by some doubts and difficulties which his convert suggested in the progress of the argument. Like too many of his neighbors, Isaac Muggs was largely endowed with the combative quality of self-esteem. This, as the discussion advanced, was goaded into exercise; and his fears and his policy were equally forgotten in the desire of present triumph. A specimen of the manner in which their deliberations warmed into controversy may be passingly afforded.

"It's agin natur' and reason, and a man's own seven senses," said Supple Jack, "to reckon on any man's right to make laws for another, when he don't live in the same country with him. I say, King George, living in England, never had a right to

make John Bannister, living on the Congaree, pay him taxes for tea or anything."

"But it's all the same country, England and America, Jack Bannister."

"Jimini!—if that's the how, what makes you give 'em different names, I want to know?"

"Oh, that was only because it happened so," said the landlord, doubtfully.

"Well, it so happens that I won't pay George the Third any more taxes. That's the word for all; and it's good reason why I shouldn't pay him, when, for all his trying, he can't make me. Here he's sent his rigiments—rigiment after rigiment—and the queen sent her rigiment, and the prince of Wales his rigiment—I reckon we didn't tear the prince's rigiment all to flinders at Hanging Rock!—Well, then, there was the Royal Scotch and the Royal Irish, and the Dutch Hessians;—I suppose they didn't call them royal, 'cause they couldn't ax in English for what they wanted:—well, what was the good of it?—all these rigiments together, couldn't make poor Jack Bannister, a Congaree boatmen, drink stamped tea or pay taxes. The rigiments, all I've named, and a hundred more, are gone like last autumn's dry leaves; and the only fighting that's a-going on now, worth to speak of, is American born 'gainst American born. Wateree facing Wateree—Congaree facing Congaree—Santee facing Santee—and cutting each other's throats to fill the pockets of one of the ugliest old men—for a white man—that ever I looked on. It spiles the face of a guinea where they put his face. Look you, Isaac Muggs, I would ha' gathered you, as Holy Book says it, even as a hen gathers up her chickens. I'd ha' taken you 'twixt my legs in time of danger, and seed you safe through—but you wouldn't! I've tried to drive reason into your head, but it's no use; you can't see what's right, and where to look for it. You answer everything I say with your eyes sot, and a cross-buttock. Now, what's to be done? I'm waiting on you to answer."

"Swounds, Supple, but you're grown a mighty hasty man o' laie," replied the landlord, beginning to be sensible of the imprudence of indulging his vanity at a moment so perilous to his

fortune. "I'm sure I've tried my best to see the right and the reason. I've hearn what you had to say——"

"Only to git some d—d crooked answer ready, that had jist as much to do with the matter as my great grand-daughter has. You hearn me, but it wa'n't to see if the truth was in me; it was only to see if you couldn't say something after me that would swallow up my saying. I don't see how you're ever to get wisdom, with such an understanding, unless it's licked into you by main force of tooth and timber."

"I could ha' fou't you once, John Bannister, though you are named Supple Jack," replied the landlord with an air of indignant reproach, which, in his own self-absorption, escaped the notice of the scout.

"It's no bad notion *that*," he continued, without heeding the language of the landlord. "Many's the time, boy and man, I have fou't with a fellow when we couldn't find out the right of it, any way; and, as sure as a gun, if I wan't right I was sartin to be licked. Besides, Isaac Muggs, it usen to be an old law, when they couldn't get at the truth any other way, to make a battle, and cry on God's mercy to help the cause that was right. By Jimini, I don't see no other way for us. I've given you all the reason I know on this subject--all that I can onderstand, I mean—for to confess a truth, there's a-many reasons for our liberties that I hear spoken, and I not able to make out the sense of one of them. But all that I know I've told you, and there's more than enough to make me sartin of the side I take. Now, as you ain't satisfied with any of my reasons, I don't see how we're to finish the business onless we go back to the old-time law, and strip to the buff for a fight. You used to brag of yourself, and you know what I am, so there's no use to ax about size and weight. If you speak agreeable to your conscience, and want nothing better than the truth, then, I don't see but a rigilar fight will give it to us; for, as I told you afore, I never yet did fight on the wrong side, that I didn't come up ondermost."

The scout, in the earnestness with which he entertained and expressed his own views and wishes, did not suffer himself to perceive some of the obstacles which lay in the way of a trans-

action such as he so deliberately and seriously proposed. He was equally inaccessible to the several attempts of his companion to lessen his regards for a project, to which the deficiency of a limb, on the part of one of the disputants, seemed to suggest a most conclusive objection. When, at length, he came to a pause, the landlord repeated his former reproachful reminiscence of a period when the challenge of the scout would not have gone unanswered by defiance.

“But now!” and he lifted the stump of his remaining arm, in melancholy answer.

“It’s well for you to talk big, John Bannister; I know you’re a strong man, and a spry. You wa’n’t called Snapple Jack for nothing. But there was a time when Isaac Muggs wouldn’t ha’ stopped to measure inches with you in a fair up and down, hip and hip, hug together. I could ha’ thrown you once, I’m certain. But what’s the chance now with my one arm, in a hng with a man that’s got two? It’s true, and I believe it, that God gives strength in a good cause; but it’s quite unreasonable for me to hope for any help, seeing as how I can’t help myself, no how. I couldn’t even come to the grip, however much I wanted to.”

“Sure enough, Muggs, and I didn’t think of that, at all. It was so natural to think that a man that let his tongue wag so free as your’n had two arms at least to back it. I’m mighty sorry, Muggs, that you ain’t, for it’s a great disapp’ntment.”

This was spoken with all the chagrin of a man who was discomfited in his very last hope of triumph.

“Well, you see I ain’t,” said the other, sulkily; “so there’s no more to be said about it.”

“Yes; but you ain’t come to a right mind yit. It’s cl’ar to me, Isaac Muggs, that one thing or t’other must be done. You must cut loose from the Black Riders, or cut loose from us. You knows the resk of the one, and I can pretty much tell you what’s the resk of the other. Now, there’s a notion hits me, and it’s one that comes nateral enough to a man that’s fou’t, in his time, in a hundred different ways. One of them ways, when I had to deal with a fellow that was so cl’ar behind me in strength that he couldn’t match me as we stood, was to tie a

hand behind my back, or a leg to a pine sapling, and make myself, as it wor, a lame man till the fight was over. Now, look you, Muggs, if it's the truth your really after, I don't care much if I try that old-fashion way with you. I'm willing to buckle my right arm to my back."

"Swounds, Supple, how you talk! Come, take a drink."

"I'll drink when the time comes, Isaac Muggs, and when it's needful; but jest now, when it's the truth I'm after, I don't suffer no divarsions. I stick as close to it, I tell you, as I does to my inimy. I don't step to drink or rest till it's a-lying fair before me. Now, it's needful for your sake, Muggs, that you come to a right sense of the reason in this business. It's needful that you give up Black Riders, tories, British, Ned Conway, ugly faces, and the old sarpent. My conscience is mightily troubled because I stood for you, and it's needful that you come to a right onderstanding afore I leave you. I've sworn it, Isaac Muggs, by Polly Longlips, as we rode along together, and Mossfoot pricked up his ears as if he onderstood it all, and was a witness for us both. Now, you know what an oath by Polly Longlips means, Isaac. It means death to the inimy—sartin death, at any reasonable distance. I don't want your life, man;—by the hokey, I don't;—and that's why I want to put the reason in you, so that you might say to me at once that you're done with these black varmint, for ever. They can do you no good—they can't help you much longer; and the time's a-coming, Isaac Muggs, when the whigs will sweep this country, along the Wate-ree, and the Congaree, and Santee, with a broom of fire, and wo to the skunk, when that time comes, that can't get clear of the brush—we to the 'coon that's caught sticking in his hollow! There's no reason you shouldn't onderstand the liberty-cause, and there's every reason why you should. But as you can't onderstand my argyment——"

"Well, but Supple, you're always in such a hurry!—"

"No hurry—never hurried a man in argyment in all my life; but when he's so tarnal slow to onderstand——"

"That's it, Supple, I'm a slow man; but I begin to see the sense of what you say."

"Well, that's something like, Muggs; but a good gripe about

the ribs, a small tug upon the hips, pretic'larly if we ax the blessing of Providence upon the argyment, will be about as good a way as any to help your onderstanding to a quicker motion. It'll put your slow pace into a smart canter."

"Psho, Supple! you're not serious in thinking that there's anything in that?"

"Ain't I, then? By gum, you don't know me, Isaac Muggs, if you think as you say. Now, what's to hender the truth from coming out in a fair tug between us? Here we stand, both tall men, most like in height and breadth, nigh alike in strength by most people's count; about the same age, and pretty much the same experience. We've had our tugs and tears, both of us, in every way; though, to be sure, you got the worst of it, so far as we count the arm; but as I tie up mine, there's no difference. Now I say, here we stand on the banks of the Wateree. Nobody sees us but the great God of all, that sees everything in nater'. He's here, the Bible says—he's here, and thar, and everywhar, and He sees everything everywhar. You believe all that, don't you, Isaac Muggs? for ef you don't believe that, why, there's no use in talking at all. There's an eend of the question."

The landlord, though looking no little mystified, muttered assent; and this strange teacher of a new, or, rather, reviver of an old faith, proceeded with accustomed volubility:—

"Well, then, here, as we are, we call upon God, and tell him how we stand. Though, to be sure, as he knows all, the telling wouldn't be such a needcessity. But, never mind—we tell him. I say to him, Here's Isaac Muggs—it ain't easy for him to onderstand this argyment, and unless he onderstands, it's a matter of life and death to him;—you recollect, Muggs, about the oath I tuk on Polly Longlips. He wants to larn, and it's needful to make a sign which'll come home to his onderstanding more el'arly than argyment by man's word of mouth. Now then we pray—and you must kneel to it beforehand, Muggs. I'll go aside under one tree, and do you take another; and we'll make a hearty prayer after the proper sign. If the Lord says I'm right, why you'll know it mighty soon by the sprawl I'll give you; but if I'm wrong, the tumble will be the other way

and I'll make the confession, though it'll be a mighty bitter needcessity, I tell you. But I ain't afeard. I'm sartin that my argyment for our rights is a true argyment, and I'll say my prayers with that sort of sartinty, that it would do your heart good if you could only feel about the same time."

"If I thought you was serious, Jack Bannister; but I'm jub'ous about it."

"Don't be jub'ous. I'm ser'ous as a sarpent. I b'lieve in God—I b'lieve he'll justify the truth, whenever we axes him in airnest for it! My old mother—God rest her bones and bless her sperrit!—she's told me of more than twenty people that's tried a wrestle for the truth. There was one man in partic'lar that she knows in Georgia: his name was Bostick. He used to be a drummer in General Oglethorpe's Highland regiment. Well, another man, a sodger in the same regiment, made an accusation agin Bostick for stealing a watch-coat, and the circumstances went mighty strong agin Bostick. But he stood it out; and though he never shot a rifle in his life before, he staked the truth and his honesty on a shot; and, by the hokey, though, as I tell you, he never lifted rifle to his sight before, he put the bullet clean through the mouth and jaw of the sodger, and cut off a small slice of his tongue, which was, perhaps, as good a judgment agin a man for false swearing as a rifle-shot could make. Well, 'twa'n't a month after that when they found it was an Ingin that had stole the coat, and so Bostick was shown to be an honest man, by God's blessing, in every way."

There was something so conclusive on the subject in this, and one or two similar anecdotes, which Supple Jack told, and which, having heard them from true believers in his youth, had led to his own adoption of the experiment, that the landlord, Muggs, offered no further doubts or objections. The earnestness of his companion became contagious, and, with far less enthusiasm of character, he was probably not unwilling—in order to the proper adoption of a feeling which was growing momentarily in favor in his eyes—to resort to the wager of battle as an easy mode of making a more formal declaration in behalf of the dominant faction of the state. The novelty of the suggestion had its recommendation also; and but few words more were wasted,

before the two went forth to a pleasant and shady grass-plot, which lay some two hundred yards further in the hollow of the wood, in order that the test so solemnly recommended, on such high authority, should be fairly made in the presence of that High Judge only, whose arbitrament, without intending any irreverence, was so earnestly invoked by the simple woodman of Congaree.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TRIAL FOR THE TRUTH.

No change could have been suddenly greater than that which was produced upon the countenance and conduct of John Bannister, when he found himself successful in bringing the landlord to the desired issue. His seriousness was all discarded,—his intense earnestness of air and tone, and a manner even playful and sportive, succeeded to that which had been so stern and sombre. He congratulated Muggs and himself, equally, on the strong probability, so near at hand, of arriving at the truth by a process so direct, and proceeded to make his arrangements for the conflict with all the buoyancy of a boy traversing the playground with "leap-frog" and "hop o' my thumb."

The landlord did not betray the same degree of eagerness, but he was not backward. He might have had his doubts about the issue, for Supple Jack had a fame in those days which spread far and wide along the three contiguous rivers. Wherever a pole-boat had made its way, there had the name of Jack Bannister found repeated echoes. But Muggs was a fearless man, and he had, besides, a very tolerable degree of self-assurance, which led him to form his own expectations and hopes of success. If he had any scruples at all, they arose rather from his doubt, whether the proposed test of truth would be a fair one—a doubt which seemed very fairly overcome in his mind, as indeed it should be in that of the reader, if full justice is done

to the final argument which the scout addressed to his adversary on this subject.

“There never was a quarrel and a fight yet that didn’t come out of a wish to l’arn or to teach the truth. What’s King George a-fighting us for this very moment? Why, to make us b’lieve in him. If he licks us, why we’ll believe in him; and if we licks him, ’gad, I’m thinking he’ll have to b’lieve in us. Aint that cl’ar, Mnggs? So, let’s fall to—if I licks you, I reckon you’ll know where to look for the truth for ever after; for I’ll measure your back on it, and your breast under it, and you’ll feel it in all your bones.”

The ground was chosen—a pleasant area beneath a shadowing grove of oaks, covered with a soft greenward, which seemed to lessen, in the minds of the combatants, the dangers of discomfiture. But when the parties began to strip for the conflict, a little difficulty suggested itself which had not before disturbed the thoughts of either. How was the superfluous arm of Snpple Jack to be tied up? Mnggs could evidently perform no such friendly office; but a brief pause given to their operations enabled the scout to arrange it easily. A running noose was made in the rope, into which he thrust the unnecessary member, then gave the end of the line to his opponent, who contrived to draw it around his body, and bind the arm securely to his side—an operation easily understood by all schoolboys who have ever been compelled to exercise their wits in securing a balance of power, in a like way, among ambitious rivals.

As they stood, front to front opposed, the broad chest, square shoulders, voluminous muscle, and manly compass of the two, naturally secured their mutual admiration. Snpple Jack could not refrain from expressing his satisfaction.

“It’s a pleasure, Isaac Mnggs, to have a turn with a man of your make. I ha’n’t seen a finer buzzum for a fight this many a day. I think, ef anything, you’re a splinter or two fuller across the breast than me;—it may be fat, and ef so, it’s the worse for you; but ef it’s the solid grain and gristle, then it’s only the worse for me. It makes me saddish enough when I look on sich a buzzum as yourn, to think that youre cut off one half in a fair allowance of arm. But I don’t think that’ll

work agin you in this 'bout, for, you see, you're used to doing without it, and making up in a double use of t'other; and I'm beginning a'ready to feel as if I warn't of no use at all in the best part of my body. Let's feel o' your heft, old fellow."

A mutual lift being taken, they prepared to take hold for the grand trial; and Supple Jack soon discovered, as he had suspected, that the customary disuse of the arm gave to his opponent an advantage in this sort of conflict, which, taken in connection with his naturally strong build of frame, rendered the task before him equally serious and doubtful. But, with a shake of the head as he made this acknowledgment, he laid his chin on the shoulder of the landlord, grasped him vigorously about the body; and Muggs, having secured a similar grasp, gave him the word, and they both swung round, under a mutual impulse, which, had there been any curious spectator at hand, would have left him very doubtful, for a long time, as to the distinct proprietorship of the several legs which so rapidly chased each other in the air.

An amateur in such matters—a professional lover of the "fancy"—would make a ravishing picture of this conflict. The alternations of seeming success—the hopes, the fears, the occasional elevations of the one party, and the depressions of the other—the horizontal tendency of this or that head and shoulder—the yielding of this frame and the staggering of that leg, might, under the pencil of a master, be made to awaken as many sensibilities in the spectator as did ever the adroit rogueries of the modern Jack Sheppard. But these details must be left to artists of their own—to the Cruikshankses!—or that more popular, if less worthy fraternity, the "Quiz, "Phiz," "Biz," "Tiz," &c., tribe of artists in Bow-street tastes and experiences, who do the visage of a rascal *con amore*, and contrive always that vice shall find its representation in ugliness. We have neither the tastes nor the talents which are needful to such artist, and shall not even attempt, by mere word-painting, to supply our deficiencies. Enough to say, that our combatants struggled with rare effort and no small share of dexterity as well as muscle. Muggs was no chicken, as Supple Jack was pleased to assure him; and the latter admitted that he

himself was a tough colt, not easy to be put upon four legs, when his natural rights demanded only two. The conflict was protracted till both parties were covered with perspiration. The turf, forming a ring of twenty feet round or more, was beaten smooth, and still the affair was undecided. Neither had yet received a fall. But Supple Jack, for reasons of his own, began to feel that the argument was about to be settled in favor of right principles.

"Your breath's coming *rether* quick now, Isaac Muggs—I'm thinking you'll soon be converted! But it's a mighty strong devil you had in you, and I'm afeard he'll make my ribs ache for a week. I'll sprawl him, though, I warrant you.

"Don't be too sartin, Jack," gasped the other.

"Don't!—Why, love you, Muggs, you couldn't say that short speech over again for the life of you."

"Couldn't eh!"

"No, not for King George's axing."

"Think so, eh?"

"Know so, man. Now, look to it. I'll only ax three tugs more. There—there's one."

"Nothing done, Jack."

"Two—three! and where are you now?" cried the exulting scout, as he deprived his opponent of grasp and footing at the same moment, and whirled him, dizzy and staggering, heels up and head to the earth.

But he was not suffered to reach it by that operation only. His course was accelerated by other hands; and three men, rushing with whoop and halloo from the copse near which the struggle had been carried on, grappled with the fallen landlord, and plied him with a succession of blows, the least of which was unnecessary for his overthrow.

It seemed that Supple Jack recognised these intruders almost in the moment of their appearance; but so sudden was their onset, and so great their clamor, that his fierce cry to arrest them was unheard, and he could only make his wishes known by adopting the summary process of knocking two of them down, by successive blows from the only fist which was left free for exercise

“How now! Who ax’d you to put your dirty fingers into my dish, Olin Massey? or you, Bob Jones? or you, Payton Barns? This is your bravery, is it, to beat a man after I’ve down’d him, eh?”

“But we didn’t know that ’twas over, Seargeant. We thought you was a-wanting help,” replied the fellow who was called Massey—it would seem in mockery only. He was a little, dried-up, withered atomy—a jaundiced “sand-lapper,” or “clay-eater,” from the Wassamasaw country—whose insignificant size and mean appearance did very inadequate justice to his resolute, fierce, and implacable character.

“And if I was a-wanting help, was you the man to give me any? Go ’long, Olin Massey—you’re a very young chap to be here. What makes you here, I want to know?”

“Why, didn’t you send us on the scout, jist here, in this very place?” said the puny but pugnacious person addressed, with a fierceness of tone and gesture, and a fire in his eye, which the feebleness of his form did not in the least seem to warrant.

“Yes, to be sure; but why didn’t you come? I’ve been here a matter of two hours by the sun; and as you didn’t come, I reckoned you had taken track after some tory varmints, and had gone deeper into the swamp. You’ve dodged some tories, eh?”

“No, ha’n’t seen a soul.”

“Then, by the hokey, Olin Massey, you’ve been squat on a log, playing old sledge for pennies!”

The scouting party looked down in silence. The little man from Wassamasaw felt his anger subside within him.

“Corporal Massey, give me them painted darlings out of your pockets, before they’re the death of you. By old natur, betwixt cards and rum, I’ve lost more of my men than by Cunningham’s bullets or Tarleton’s broadswords. Give me them cards, Olin Massey, and make your respects to my good natur, that I don’t blow you to the colonel.”

The offender obeyed. He drew from his pocket, in silence, a pack of the dirtiest cards that ever were thumbed over a pine log, and delivered them to his superior with the air of a school-boy from whom the master had cruelly taken, “at one fell swoop,” top, marbles, and ball.

“There,” said Supple Jack, as he thrust them into his pocket — “I’ll put them up safely, boys, and you shall have ’em ag’in, for a whole night—after our next brush with the tories. Go you now and git your nags in readiness, while I see to Muggs. I’ll jine you directly at the red clay.”

When they had disappeared, he turned to the landlord, who had meanwhile risen, though rather slowly, from the earth, and now stood a silent spectator of the interview.

“Now, Muggs, I reckon we’ll have to try the tug over agin. These blind boys of mine put in jest a moment too soon. They helped to flatten you, I’m thinking; and so, if you ain’t quite satisfied which way the truth is, it’s easy to go it over agin.”

The offer was more liberal than Muggs expected or desired. He was already sufficiently convinced.

“No, no, Supple; you’re too much for me!”

“It’s the truth that’s too much for you, Muggs—not me! I reckon you’re satisfied now which way the truth is. You’ve got a right onderstanding in this business.”

The landlord made some admissions, the amount of which, taken without circumlocution, was, that he had been whipped in a fair fight; and, according to all the laws of war, as well as common sense, that he was now at the disposal of the victor. His acknowledgments were sufficiently satisfactory.

“We’ve prayed for it, Muggs, and jest as we prayed we got it. You’re rubbing your legs and your sides, but what’s a bruise and a pain in the side, or even a broken rib, when we’ve got the truth? After that, a hurt of the body is a small matter; and then a man don’t much fear any sort of danger. Let me know that I’m in the right way, and that justice is on my side, and I don’t see the danger, though it stands in the shape of the biggest gun-muzzle that ever bellowed from the walls of Charlestown in the great siege. Now, Muggs, since you say now that you onderstand the argyment I set you, and that you agree to have your liberties the same as the rest of us, I’ll jist open your eyes to a little of the resk you’ve been a-running for the last few days. Look—read this here letter, and see if you can recollect the writing.”

The blood left the cheeks of the landlord the instant that the scout handed him the letter.

“Where did you find it, Supple?” he gasped, apprehensively.

“Find it! I first found the sculp of the chap that carried it,” was the cool reply. “But you answer to the writing, don’t you—it’s your’n?”

“Well, I reckon you know it, Supple, without my saying so.”

‘Reckon I do, Muggs—it’s pretty well known in these parts; and s’pose any of our boys but me had got hold of it! Where would you be, I wonder?—swinging on one of the oak limbs before your own door; dangling a good pair of legs of no sort of use to yourself or anybody else. But I’m your friend, Muggs; a better friend to you than you’ve been to yourself. I come and argy the matter with you, and reason with you to your understanding, and make a convarision of you without trying to frighten you into it. Now that you see the error of your ways, I show you their danger also. This letter is tory all over, but there’s one thing in it that made me have marcy upon you—it’s here, jist in the middle, where you beg that bloody tory, Ned Conway, to have marcy on his brother. Anybody that speaks friendly, or kind, of Clarence Conway, I’ll help him if I can. Now, Muggs, I’ll go with you to your house, and there I’ll burn this letter in your own sight, so that it’ll never rise up in judgment agin you. But you must make a clean breast of it. You must tell me all you know, that I may be sure you feel the truth according to the lesson, which, with the helping of God, I’ve been able to give you.”

The landlord felt himself at the mercy of the scout; but the generous treatment which he had received from the worthy fellow—treatment so unwonted at that period of wanton bloodshed and fierce cruelty—inclined him favorably to the cause, the arguments for which had been produced by so liberal a disputant. His own policy, to which we have already adverted more than once, suggested far better; and, if the landlord relented at all in his revelations, it was with the feeling—natural, perhaps, to every mind, however lowly—which makes it revolt at the idea of becoming treacherous, even to the party which it has joined for purposes of treachery. The information which the scout ob-

tained, and which was valuable to the partisans, he drew from the relator by piecemeal. Every item of knowledge was drawn from him by its own leading question, and yielded with broken utterance, and the half-vacant look of one who is only in part conscious, as he is only in part willing.

"Pretty well, Muggs, though you don't come out like a man who felt the argyment at the bottom of his onderstanding. There's something more now. In this bit of writing there's a line or two about one Peter Flagg, who, it seems, carried forty-one niggers to town last Jannary, and was to ship 'em to the West Injies. Now, can you tell if he did ship them niggers?"

"I can't exactly now, Supple—it's onbeknown to me."

"But how come you to write about this man and them niggers?"

"Why, you see, Peter Flagg was here looking after the captain."

"Ah!—he was here, was he?"

"Yes; he jined the captain just before Bntler's men gin him that chase."

"He's with Ned Conway then, is he?"

"No, I reckon not. He didn't stay with the captain but half a day."

"Ah! ha!—and where did he go then?"

"Somewhere across the river."

"Below, I'm thinking."

"Yes, he took the lower route; I reckon he went toward the Santee."

"Isaac Muggs, don't you know that the business of Pete Flagg is to ship stolen niggers to the West Injy islands?"

"Well, Supple, I believe it is, though I don't know."

"That's enough about Pete. Now, Muggs, when did you see Watson Gray last? You know the man I mean. He comes from the Congaree near Granby. He's the one that watches Brier Park for Ned Conway, and brings him in every report about the fine bird that keeps there. You know what bird I mean, don't you?"

"Miss Flora, I reckon."

"A very good reckon. Well! you know Gray?"

“Yes—he’s a great scout—the best, after you, I’m thinking, on the Congaree.”

“Before me, Muggs,” said the scout, with a sober shake of the head. “He’s before me, or I’d ha’ trapped him many’s the long day ago. He’s the only outlyer that’s beyond my heft, that I acknowledge on the river: but he’s a skunk—a bad chap about the heart. His bosom’s full of black places. He loves to do ugly things, and to make a brag of ’em afterward, and that’s a bad character for a good scout. But that’s neither here nor thar. I only want you now to think up, and tell me when he was here last.”

“Well!—”

“Ah, don’t stop to ‘well’ about it,” cried the other impatiently—“speak out like a bold man that’s jest got the truth. Wa’n’t Watson Gray here some three days ago—before the troop came down—and didn’t he leave a message by word of mouth with you? Answer me that, Muggs, like a good whig as you ought to be.”

“It’s true as turpentine, Supple; but, Lord love you, how did you come to guess it?”

“No matter that!—up now, and tell me what that same message was.”

“That’s a puzzler, I reckon, for I didn’t onderstand it all myself. There was five sticks and two bits of paper—on one was a long string of multiplication and ’rithmetic—figures and all that!—on the other was a sort of drawing that looked most like a gal on horseback.”

“Eh!—Thè gal on horseback was nateral enough. Perhaps I can make out that; but the bits of stiok and ’rithmetic is all gibberish. Wa’n’t there nothing that you had to say by word of mouth to Ned Conway?”

“Yes, to be sure. He left word as how the whigs was getting thicker and thicker—how Sumter and Lee marked all the road from Granby down to Orangeburg with their horse-tracks, and never afeard; and how Greene was a-pushing across toward Ninety-Six, where he was guine to ’sieve Cruger.”

“Old news, Muggs, and I reckon you’ve kept back the best

for the last. What did he have to say 'bout Miss Flora? Speak up to that!"

"Not a word. I don't think he said anything more, unless it was something about boats being a-plenty, and no danger of horse-tracks on the river."

"There's a meaning in that; and I must spell it out," said the scout; "but now, Muggs, another question or two. Who was the man that Ned Conway sent away prisoner jest before day?"

"Lord, Supple, you sees everything!" ejaculated the landlord. Pressed by the wily scout, he related, with tolerable correctness, all the particulars of the affray the night before between the captain of the Black Riders and his subordinate; and threw such an additional light upon the causes of quarrel between them as suggested to the scout a few new measures of policy.

"Well, Muggs," said he, at the close, "I'll tell you something in return for all you've told me. My boys caught that same Stockton and trapped his guard in one hour after they took the road; and I'm glad to find, by putting side by side what they confessed and what you tell me, that you've stuck to the truth like a gentleman and a whig. They didn't tell me about the lieutenant's wanting to be cappin, but that's detarmined me to parole the fellow that he may carry on his mischief in the troop. I'm going to leave you now, Muggs; but you'll see an old man coming here to look after a horse about midday. Give him a drink, and say to him, that you don't know nothing about the horse, but there's a hound on track after something, that went barking above, three hours before. That'll sarve his purpose and mine too: and now, God bless you, old hoy, and, remember, I'm your friend, and I can do you better sarvice now than any two Black Riders of the gang. As I've converted you, I'll stand by you, and I'll never be so far off in the swamp that I can't hear your grunting, and come out to your help. So, good-by, and no more forgitting of that argyment."

"And where are you going now, Supple?"

"Psho, hoy, that's telling. Was I to let you know that, Watson Gray might worm it out from under your tongue, without taking a wrastle for it. I'll tell you when I come back."

And with a good-humored chuckle the scout disappeared, leaving the landlord to meditate, at his leisure, upon the value of those arguments which had made him in one day resign a faith which had been cherished as long—as it had proved profitable. Muggs had no hope that the new faith would prove equally so; but if it secured to him the goodly gains of the past, he was satisfied. Like many of the tories at this period, he received a sudden illumination, which showed him in one moment the errors for which he had been fighting five years. Let not this surprise our readers. In the closing battles of the Revolution in South Carolina, many were the tories, converted to the patriot cause, who, at the eleventh hour, displayed the most conspicuous bravery fighting on the popular side. And this must not be suffered to lower them in our opinion. The revolutionary war, in South Carolina, did not so much divide the people, because of the tendencies to loyalty, or liberty, on either hand, as because of social and other influences—personal and sectional feuds—natural enough to a new country, in which one third of the people were of foreign birth.

CHAPTER XV.

GLIMPSES OF PASSION AND ITS FRUITS.

SUPPLE JACK soon joined his commander, bringing with him, undiminished by use or travel, all the various budgets of intelligence which he had collected in his scout. He had dismissed the insubordinate lieutenant of the Black Riders on parole; not without suffering him to hear, as a familiar *on dit* along the river, that Captain Morton was about to sacrifice the troop at the first opportunity, and fly with all his booty from the country.

“I’ve know’d,” said he to himself, after Stockton took his departure, “I’ve know’d a smaller spark than that set off a whole barrel of gunpowder.”

To his colonel, having delivered all the intelligence which he

had gained of the movements as well of the public as private enemy, he proceeded, as usual, to give such counsel as the nature of his revelations seemed to suggest. This may be summed up in brief, without fatiguing the reader with the detailed conversation which ensued between them in their examination of the subject.

“From what I see, colonel, Ned Conway is gone below. It’s true he did seem to take the upper route, but Massey can’t find the track after he gits to Fisher’s Slue” (diminutive for sluice). “There, I reckon, he chopped right round, crossed the slue, I’m thinking, and dashed below. Well, what’s he gone below for, and what’s Pete Flagg gone for across to the Santee?—Pete, that does nothing but ship niggers for the British officers. They all see that they’re got to go, and they’re for making hay while the sun is still a-shining. Now, I’m thinking that Ned Conway is after your mother’s niggers. He’ll steal ’em and ship ’em by Pete Flagg to the West Indies, and be the first to follow, the moment that Rawdon gits licked by Greene. It’s cl’ar to me that you ought to go below and see about the business.”

The arguments of the woodman were plausible enough, and Clarence Conway felt them in their fullest force. But he had his doubts about the course alleged to be taken by his kinsman, and a feeling equally selfish, perhaps, but more noble intrinsically, made him fancy that his chief interest lay above. He was not insensible to his mother’s and his own probable loss, should the design of Edward Conway really be such as Banister suggested, but a greater stake, in his estimation, lay in the person of the fair Flora Middleton; and he could not bring himself to believe, valuing her charms as he did himself, that his kinsman would forego such game for the more mercenary objects involved in the other adventure.

The tenor of the late interview between himself and the chief of the Black Riders, had forced his mind to brood with serious anxiety on the probable fortunes of this lady; and his own hopes and fears becoming equally active at the same time, the exulting threats and bold assumptions of Edward Conway—so very different from the sly humility of his usual deportment—awakened all his apprehensions. He resolved to go forward to

the upper Congaree, upon the pleasant banks of which stood the princely domains of the Middleton family ; persuaded, as he was, that the rival with whom he contended for so great a treasure, equally wily and dishonorable, had in contemplation some new villany, which, if not seasonably met, would result in equal loss to himself and misery to the maiden of his heart.

Yet he did not resolve thus, without certain misgivings and self-reproaches. His mother was quite as dear to him as ever mother was to the favorite son of her affections. He knew the danger in which her property stood, and was not heedless of the alarm which she would experience, in her declining years and doubtful health, at the inroad of any marauding foe. The arguments of a stronger passion, however, prevailed above these apprehensions, and he contented himself with a determination to make the best of his way below, as soon as he had assured himself of the safety and repose of everything above. Perhaps, too, he had a farther object in this contemplated visit to Flora Middleton. The counsel of Bannister on a previous occasion, which urged upon him to bring his doubts to conviction on the subject of the course which her feelings might be disposed to take, found a corresponding eagerness in his own heart to arrive at a knowledge, always so desirable to a lover, and which he seeks in fear and trembling as well as in hope.

"I will but see her," was his unuttered determination, "I will but see her, and see that she is safe, and hear at once her final answer. These doubts are too painful for endurance ! Better to hear the worst at once, than live always in apprehension of it."

Leaving the youthful partisan to pursue his own course, let us now turn for a while to that of Edward Morton, and the gloomy and fierce banditti which he commanded. He has already crossed the Wateree, traversed the country between that river and the Congaree ; and after various small adventures, such as might be supposed likely to occur in such a progress, but which do not demand from us any more special notice, we find him on the banks of the latter stream, in the immediate neighborhood of the spot where it receives into its embrace the twin though warring waters of the Saluda and the Broad—a spot, subse-

quently, better distinguished as the chosen site of one of the loveliest towns of the state—the seat of its capital, and of a degree of refinement, worth, courtesy, and taste, which are not often equalled in any region, and are certainly surpassed in none.

Columbia, however, at the period of our story, was not in existence; and the meeting of its tributary waters, their striving war, incessant rivalry, and the continual clamors of their strife, formed the chief distinction of the spot; and conferred upon it no small degree of picturesque vitality and loveliness. A few miles below, on the opposite side of the stream, stood then the flourishing town of Granby—a place of considerable magnitude and real importance to the wants of the contiguous country, but now fallen into decay and utterly deserted. A garrisoned town of the British, it had just before this period been surrendered by Colonel Maxwell to the combined American force under Sumter and Lee—an event which counselled the chief of the Black Riders to an increased degree of caution as he approached a neighborhood so likely to be swarming with enemies.

Here we may as well communicate to the reader such portions of the current history of the time, as had not yet entirely reached this wily marauder. While he was pursuing his personal and petty objects of plunder on the Wateree, Lord Rawdon had fled from Camden, which he left in flames; Sumter had taken Orangeburg; Fort Motte had surrendered to Marion; the British had been compelled to evacuate their post at Nelson's ferry; and the only fortified place of which they now kept possession in the interior was that of Ninety-Six; a station of vast importance to their interests in the back country, and which, accordingly, they resolved to defend to the last extremity.

But though ignorant of some of the events here brought together, Edward Morton was by no means ignorant of the difficulties which were accumulating around the fortunes of the British, and which, he naturally enough concluded, must result in these, and even worse disasters. Of the fall of Granby he was aware; of the audacity and number of the American parties, his scouts hourly informed him, even if his own frequent

and narrow escapes had failed to awaken him to a sense of the prevailing dangers. But, governed by an intense selfishness, he had every desire to seek, in increased caution, for the promotion of those interests and objects, without which his patriotism might possibly have been less prudent, and of the proper kind. He had neither wish nor motive to go forward rashly; and, accordingly, we find him advancing to the Saluda, with the slow, wary footsteps of one who looks to behold his enemy starting forth, without summons of trumpet, from the bosom of every brake along the route.

It was noon when his troop reached the high banks of the river, the murmur of whose falls, like the distant mutterings of ocean upon some island-beach, were heard, pleasantly soothing, in the sweet stillness of a forest noon. A respite was given to the employments of the troop. Scouts were sent out, videttes stationed, and the rest surrendered themselves to repose, each after his own fashion: some to slumber, some to play, while others, like their captain, wandered off to the river banks, to angle or to meditate, as their various moods might incline.

Morton went apart from the rest, and found a sort of hiding-place upon a rock immediately overhanging the river, where, surrounded by an umbrageous forest-growth, he threw his person at length, and yielded himself up to those brooding cares which he felt were multiplying folds about his mind, in the intangling grasp of which it worked slowly and without its usual ease and elasticity.

The meditations are inevitably mournful with a spirit such as his. Guilt is a thing of isolation always, even when most surrounded by its associates and operations. Its very insecurity tends to its isolation as completely as its selfishness. Edward Morton felt all this. He had been toiling, and not in vain, for a mercenary object. His spoils had been considerable. He had hoarded up a secret treasure in another country, secure from the vicissitudes which threatened every fortune in that where he had won it; but he himself was insecure. Treachery, he began to believe, and not a moment too soon, was busy all around him. He had kept down fear, and doubt, and distrust, by a life of continual action; but it was in moments of repose

like this, that he himself found none. It was then that his fears grew busy—that he began to distrust his fate, and to apprehend that all that future, which he fondly fancied to pass in serenity of fortune, if not of mind and feeling, would yet be clouded and compassed with denial. His eye, stretching away on either hand, beheld the two chafing rivers rushing downward to that embrace which they seem at once to desire and to avoid. A slight barrier of land and shrubbery interposes to prevent their too sudden meeting. Little islands throw themselves between, as if striving to thwart the fury of their wild collision, but in vain! The impetuous waters force their way against every obstruction; and wild and angry, indeed, as if endued with moral energies and a human feeling of hate, is their first encounter—their recoil—their return to the conflict, in foam and roar, and commotion, until exhaustion terminates the strife, and they at length repose together in the broad valleys of the Congaree below.

The turbulence of the scene alone interested the dark-bosomed spectator whose fortunes we contemplate. He saw neither its sublime nor its gentle features—its fair groves—its sweet islands of rock and tufted vegetation, upon which the warring waters, as if mutually struggling to do honor to their benevolent interposition, fling ever their flashing, and transparent wreaths of whitish foam. His moody thought was busy in likening the prospect to that turbulence, the result of wild purposes and wicked desires, which filled his own bosom. A thousand impediments, like the numerous rocks and islands that rose to obstruct the passage of the streams which he surveyed, lay in his course, baffling his aim, driving him from his path, resisting his desires, and scattering inefficiently all his powers. Even as the waters which he beheld, complaining in the fruitless conflict with the rude masses from which they momentarily recoiled, so did he, unconsciously, break into speech, as the difficulties in his own future progress grew more and more obvious to his reflections.

“There must soon be an end to this. That old fool was right. I should be a fool to wait to see it. Once, twice, thrice already, have I escaped, when death seemed certain. Let me not provoke Fortune—let me not task her too far. It will be

impossible to baffle these bloodhounds much longer! Their scent is too keen, their numbers too great, and the spoil too encouraging. Besides, I have done enough. I have proved my loyalty. Loyalty indeed!—a profitable pretext!—and there will be no difficulty now in convincing Rawdon that I ought not to be the last to linger here in waiting for the end. That end—what shall it be?—A hard fight—a bloody field—a sharp pain and quiet! Quiet!—that were something, too, which might almost reconcile one to linger. Could I be secure of that, at the risk of a small pain only; but it may be worse. Captivity were something worse than death. In their hands, alive, and no Spanish tortures would equal mine. No! no! I must not encounter that danger. I must keep in reserve one weapon at least, consecrated to the one purpose. This—this! must secure me against captivity!”

He drew from his bosom, as he spoke these words, a small poniard of curious manufacture, which he contemplated with an eye of deliberate study; as if the exquisite Moorish workmanship of the handle, and the rich and variegated enamel of the blade, served to promote the train of gloomy speculation into which he had fallen. A rustling of the leaves—the slight step of a foot immediately behind him—caused him to start to his feet;—but he resumed his place with an air of vexation, as he beheld in the intruder, the person of the boy whom we have seen once before in close attendance upon him.

“How now!” he exclaimed impatiently; “can I have no moment to myself—why will you thus persist in following me?”

“I have no one else to follow,” was the meek reply—the tones falling, as it were, in echo from a weak and withered heart.

“I have no one else to follow, and—and—”

The lips faltered into silence.

“Speak out—and what?”

“You once said to me that I should go with none but you—oh, Edward Conway, spurn me not—drive me not away with those harsh looks and cruel accents;—let me linger beside you—though, if you please it, still out of your sight; for I am des-

olate—oh! so desolate, when you leave me!—you, to whom alone, of all the world, I may have some right to look for protection and for life.”

The sex of the speaker stood revealed—in the heaving breast—the wo-begone countenance—the heart-broken despondency of look and gesture—the tear-swollen and down-looking eye. She threw herself before him as she spoke, her face buried in her hands and prone upon the ground. Her sobs succeeded her speech, and in fact silenced it.

“No more of this, Mary Clarkson, you disturb and vex me. Rise. I have seen, for some days past, that you had some new tribulation—some new burden of wo to deliver;—out with it now—say what you have to say;—and, look you, no whinings! Life is too seriously full of real evils, dangers, and difficulties, to suffer me to bear with these imaginary afflictions.”

“Oh, God, Edward Conway, it is not imaginary with me. It is real—it is to be seen—to be felt. I am dying with it. It is in my pale cheek—my burning brain, in which there is a constant fever. Oh, look not upon me thus—thus angrily—for, in truth I am dying. I feel it! I know that I can not live very long;—and yet, I am so afraid to die. It is this fear, Edward Conway, that makes me intrude upon you now.”

“And what shall I do, and what shall I say to lessen your fears of death? And why should I do it—why, yet more, should you desire it? Death is, or ought to be, a very good thing for one who professes to be so very miserable in life as yourself. You heard me as you approached?—if you did, you must have heard my resolution to seek death, from my own weapon, under certain circumstances. Now, it is my notion that whenever life becomes troublesome, sooner than grumble at it hourly, I should make use of some small instrument like this. A finger prick only—no greater pain—will suffice, and put an end to life and pain in the same instant.”

“Would it could! would it could!” exclaimed the unfortunate victim of that perfidy which now laughed her miseries to scorn.

“Why, so it can! Do you doubt? I tell you, that there is no more pain, Mary, in driving this dagger into your heart—into its most tender and vital places—than there would be,

burying it in your finger. Death will follow, and there's the end of it."

"Not the end, not the end—if it were, Edward Conway, how gladly would I implore from your hand the blessing of that lasting peace which would follow from its blow. It is the hereafter—the awful hereafter—which I fear to meet."

"Pshaw! a whip of the hangman—a bugbear of the priests, for cowards and women! I'll warrant you, if you are willing to try the experiment, perfect security from all pain hereafter!"

And the heartless wretch extended toward her the hand which contained the glittering weapon. She shuddered and turned away—giving him, as she did so, such a look as, even he, callous as he was, shrunk to behold. A glance of reproach, more keen, deep, and touching, than any word of complaint which her lips had ever ventured to utter.

"Alas! Edward Conway, has it really come to this! To you I have yielded everything—virtue, peace of mind—the love of father, and of mother, and of friends—all that's most dear—all that the heart deems most desirable—and you offer me, in return, for these—death, death!—the sharp, sudden poniard—the cold, cold grave! If you offer it, Edward Conway—strike!—the death is welcome! Even the fear of it is forgotten. Strike, set me free;—I will vex you no longer with my presence!"

"Why, what a peevish fool you are, Mary Clarkson! though, to be sure, you are not very different from the rest. There's no pleasing any of you, do as we may. You first come to me to clamor about your distaste of life, and by your perpetual grumblings you seek to make it as distasteful to me as to yourself. Well, I tell you—this is *my* remedy—this sudden, sharp dagger! Whenever I shall come to regard life as a thing of so much misery as you do, I shall end it; and I also add, in the benevolence of my heart—'here is my medicament—I share it with you!'—and lo! what an uproar—what a howling. Look you, Mary, you must trouble me no longer in this manner. I am, just now, in the worst possible mood to bear with the best friend under the sun."

"Oh, Edward Conway, and this too!—this, after your prom

ise! Do you remember your promise to me, by the poplar spring, that hour of my shame?—that awful hour! Oh! what was that promise, Edward Conway? Speak, Edward Conway! Repeat that promise, and confess I was not all guilty. No, no! I was only all credulous! You beguiled me with a promise—with an oath—a solemn oath before Heaven—did you not?—that I should be your wife. Till then, at least, I was not guilty!”

“Did I really make such a promise to you—eh?” he asked with a scornful affectation of indifference.

“Surely, you will not deny that you did?” she exclaimed, with an earnestness which was full of amazement.

“Well, I scarcely remember. But it matters not much, Mary Clarkson. You were a fool for believing. How could you suppose that I would marry you? Ha! Is it so customary for pride and poverty to unite on the Congaree that you should believe? Is it customary for the eldest son of one of the wealthiest families to wed with the child of one of the poorest? Why, you should have known by the promise itself that I was amusing myself with your credulity—that my only object was to beguile you—to win you on my own terms—not to wear you! I simply stooped for conquest, Mary Clarkson, and you were willing to believe any lie for the same object. It was your vanity that beguiled you, Mary Clarkson, and not my words. You wished to be a fine lady, and you are——”

“Oh, do not stop. Speak it all out. Give to my folly and my sin their true name. I can bear to hear it now without shrinking, for my own thoughts have already spoken to my heart the foul and fearful truth. I am, indeed, loathsome to myself, and would not care to live but that I fear to die. ’Tis not the love of life that makes me turn in fear from the dagger which you offer. This, Edward Morton—’tis this which brings me to you now. I do not seek you for guidance or for counsel—no, no!—no such folly moves me now. I come to you for protection—for safety—for security from sudden death—from the judge—from the avenger! He is pursuing us—I have seen him!”—and, as she spoke these almost incoherent words, her eye looked wildly among the thick woods around, with a glance

full of apprehension, as if the danger she spoke of was in reality at hand. Surprise was clearly expressed in the features of her callous paramour.

“He! Of whom speak you, child? Who is it you fear?”—and his glance followed the wild direction of her eyes.

“My father!—Jacob Clarkson! He is in search of me—of you! And oh! Edward Conway, I know him so well, that I tell you it will not be your high connections and aristocratic birth that will save you on the Congaree from a poor man’s rifle, though these may make it a trifling thing for you to ruin a poor man’s child. He is even now in search of us—I have seen him! I have seen the object of his whole soul in his eye, as I have seen it a hundred times before. He will kill you—he will kill us both, Edward Conway, but he will have revenge!”

“Pshaw, girl! You are very foolish. How can your father find us out? How approach us? The thought is folly. As an individual he can only approach us by coming into the line of our sentinels; these disarm him, and he then might look upon us, in each other’s arms, without being able to do us any injury.”

“Do not speak so, Edward, for God’s sake!—in each other’s arms no longer—no more!”—and a sort of shivering horror passed over her frame as she spoke these words.

“As you please!” muttered the outlaw, with an air and smile of scornful indifference. The girl proceeded—

“But, even without weapons, the sight of my father—the look of his eyes upon mine—would kill me—would be worse than any sort of death! Oh, God! let me never see him more! Let him never see me—the child that has lost him, lost herself, and is bringing his gray hairs in sorrow to the grave.”

“Mary Clarkson, who do you think to cheat with all this hypocrisy of sentiment? Don’t I know that all those fine words and phrases are picked out of books. This talk is too customary to be true.”

“They may be!—they were books, Edward Conway, which you brought me, and which I loved to read for your sake. Alas! I did not follow their lessons.”

“Enough of this stuff, and now to the common sense of this business. You have seen your father, you say; where?”

“On the Wateree; the day before you came back from your brother in the swamp!”

“Brother me no brothers!” exclaimed the outlaw fiercely; “and look you, girl, have I not told you a thousand times that I wish not to be called Conway. Call me Morton, Cunningham, John Stuart, or the devil—or any of the hundred names by which my enemies distinguish me and denominate my deeds; but call me not by the name of Conway. I, too, have something filial in my nature; and if you wish not to see the father you have offended, perhaps it is for the same reason that I would not hear the name of mine. Let that dutiful reason content you—it may be that I have others; but these we will forbear for the present. What of Jacob Clarkson, when you saw him? Where was he?—how employed?—and where were *you*, and who with you?”

“Oh, God! I was fearfully nigh to him, and he saw me!—He fixed his keen, cold, deathly eye upon me, and I thought I should have sunk under it. I thought he knew me; but how could he in such a guise as this, and looking, as I do, pale, withered, and broken down with sin and suffering.”

“Pshaw! Where was all this?”

“At Isaac’s tavern. There was none there beside myself and Isaac. He came in and asked for a calabash of water. He would drink nothing, though Muggs kindly offered him, but he would not. He looked at me only for an instant; but it seemed to me, in that instant, that he looked through and through my soul. He said nothing to me, and hardly anything to Isaac,—though he asked him several questions; and when he drank the water, and rested for a little while, he went away. But, while he stayed, I thought I should have died. I could have buried myself in the earth to escape his sight; and yet how I longed to throw myself at his feet, and beg for mercy! Could I have done that, I think I should have been happy. I should have been willing then to die. But I dared not. He hadn’t a human look—he didn’t seem to feel;—and I feared that he might kill me without hearkening to my prayer.”

“Muggs should have told me of this,” said the other, musingly.

“He must have forgot it, on account of the uproar and great confusion afterward.”

“That is no good reason for a cool fellow like him. I must see into it. It was a strange omission.”

“But what will you do, Edward—where shall we fly?”

“Fly! where should we fly—and why? Because of your father? Have I not already told you that he can not approach us to do harm; and, as for discovering us, have you not seen that he looked upon his own child without knowing her; and I’m sure he can never recollect me as the man who once helped him to provide for the only undutiful child he had.”

“Spare me! Be not so *cruel* in your words, Edward, for, of a truth, though I may escape the vengeance of my father, I feel certain that I have not long—not very long—to live.”

“Nor I, Mary; so, while life lasts, let us be up and doing!” was the cold-blooded reply, as, starting to his feet, as if with the desire to avoid further conference on an annoying subject, he prepared to leave the spot where it had taken place.

Her lips moved, but she spoke not. Her hands were clasped, but the entreaty which they expressed was lost equally upon his eyes and heart; and if she meant to pray to him for a further hearing, her desire was unexpressed in any stronger form. By him it remained unnoticed. Was it unnoticed by the overlooking and observant God!—for, to him, when the other had gone from sight and hearing, were her prayers then offered, with, seemingly, all the sincerity of a broken and a contrite spirit.

CHAPTER XVI.

A GLIMPSE OF BRIER PARK: THE OATH OF THE BLACK RIDERS.

By evening of the same day, the scouts made their appearance, and their reports were such as to determine the captain of the Black Riders to cross the Congaree and pursue his objects, whatever they might be, along its southern banks. Sufficient time for rest had been allotted to his troop. He believed they had employed it as assigned; little dreaming how busy some of them had been, in the concoction of schemes, which, if in character not unlike his own, were scarcely such as were congenial with his authority or his desires. But these are matters for the future.

Though resolved on crossing the river, yet, as the chosen ferry lay several miles below, it became necessary to sound to horse; and, about dusk, the troop was again put in motion, and continued on their route till midnight.

They had compassed but a moderate distance in this space of time, moving as they did with great precaution; slowly of course, as was necessary while traversing a country supposed to be in the full possession of an enemy, and over roads, which, in those days, were neither very distinct, nor fairly open, nor in the best condition. They reached the ferry, but halted for the remainder of the night without making any effort to cross.

At the dawn of day, Mary Clarkson, still seemingly a boy, was one of the first, stealing along the bank of the river, to remark the exquisite beauty of the prospect which on every side opened upon her eye. The encampment of the Black Riders had been made along the river bluff, but sufficiently removed from its edge to yield the requisite degree of woodland shelter. The spot chosen for the purpose was a ridge unusually elevated for that portion of the stream, which is commonly skirted by an alluvial bottom of the richest swamp undergrowth. This, on

either hand, lay below, while the river, winding upon its way in the foreground, was as meek and placid as if it never knew obstacle or interruption.

Yet, but a few miles above, how constant had been its strife with the rocks—how unceasing its warring clamors. But a few of these obstructions, and these were obstructions in appearance only, occurred immediately at the point before us; and these, borne down by the violence of the conflict carried on above, might seem rather the trophies of its own triumph, which the river brought away with it in its downward progress—serving rather to overcome the monotony of its surface, and increase the picturesque of its prospect, than as offering any new obstacle, or as provoking to any farther strife. Its waters broke with a gentle violence on their rugged tops, and passed over and around them with a slight murmur, which was quite as clearly a murmur of merriment as one of annoyance.

Around, the foliage grew still in primitive simplicity. There, the long-leaved pine, itself the evidence of a forest undishonored by the axe, reared its lofty hrow, soaring and stooping, a giant surveying his domain. About him, not inferior in pride and majesty, though perhaps inferior in height, were a numerous growth of oaks, of all the varieties common to the region;—tributary, as beauty still must ever be to strength, were the rich and various hues of the bay, the poplar, the dogwood, and the red bud of the sassafras—all growing and blooming in a profligate luxuriance, unappreciated and unemployed, as if the tastes of the Deity, quite as active as his benevolence, found their own sufficient exercise in the contemplation of such a treasure, though man himself were never to be created for its future enjoyment.

But beyond lay a prospect in which art, though co-operating with nature to the same end, had proved herself a dangerous rival. Stretching across the stream, the eye took in, at a glance, the territory of one of those proud baronial privileges of Carolina—the seat of one of her short-lived nobility—broad fields, smooth-shaven lawns, green meadows melting away into the embrace of the brown woods—fair gardens—moss-covered and solemn groves; and in the midst of all, and over all—standing upon the crown of a gently sloping hill, one of those stern, strong, frowning fabrics of the olden

time, which our ancestors devised to answer the threefold purposes of the dwelling, the chapel, and the castle for defence.

There, when the courage of the frontier-men first broke ground, and took possession, among the wild and warlike hunters of the Santee, the Congaree, and the Saluda, did the gallant General Middleton plant his towers, amidst a region of great perils, but of great natural beauty. With fearless soul, he united an exquisite taste, and for its indulgence he was not unwilling to encounter the perils of the remote wilderness to which he went. Perhaps, too, the picturesque of the scenery was heightened to his mind by the dangers which were supposed to environ it; and the forest whose frowning shades discouraged most others, did not lose any of its attractions in his sight, because it sometimes tasked him to defend his possessions by the strong arm and the ready weapon. The bear disputed with him the possession of the honey-tree; and the red man, starting up, at evening, from the thicket, not unfrequently roused him with his fearful halloo, to betake himself to those defences, which made his habitation a fortress no less than a dwelling.

But these, which are difficulties to the slothful, and terrors to the timid, gave a zest to adventure, which sweetens enterprise in the estimation of the brave; and it did not lessen the value of Brier Park to its first proprietor because he was sometimes driven to stand a siege from the red men of the Congaree.

But the red men disappeared, and with them the daring adventurer who planted his stakes, among the first, in the bosom of their wild possessions. He, too, followed them at the appointed season; and his proud old domains fell into the hands of gentler proprietors. Under the countenance of her venerable grandmother, Flora Middleton—truly a rose in the wilderness—blossomed almost alone; at a time when the region in which the barony stood, was covered with worse savages than even the Congarees had been in the days of their greatest license.

But the besom of war—which swept the country as with flame and sword—had paused in its ravages at this venerated threshold. With whig and tory alike, the name of old General Middleton, the patriarch of the Congaree country, was held equally sacred;—and the lovely granddaughter who inherited

his wealth, though celebrated equally as a belle and a rebel, was suffered to hold her estates and opinions without paying those heavy penalties which, in those days, the possession of either was very likely to incur.

Some trifling exceptions to this general condition of indulgence might occasionally take place. Sometimes a marauding party trespassed upon the hen-roost, or made a bolder foray into the cattle-yard and storehouses; but these petty depredations sunk out of sight in comparison with the general state of insecurity and robbery which prevailed everywhere else.

The more serious annoyances to which the inhabitants of Brier Park were subject, arose from the involuntary hospitality which they were compelled to exercise toward the enemies of their country. Flora Middleton had been forced to receive with courtesy the "amiable" Cornwallis, and the brutal Ferguson; and to listen with complacency to words of softened courtesy and compliment from lips which had just before commanded to the halter a score of her countrymen, innocent of all offence, except that of defending, with the spirit of manhood and filial love, the soil which gave them birth. The equally sanguinary and even more stern Rawdon—the savage Tarleton, and the fierce and malignant Cunningham, had also been her uninvited guests, to whom she had done the honors of the house with the grace and spirit natural to her name and education, but never at the expense of her patriotism.

"My fair foe, Flora," was the phrase with which—with unaccustomed urbanity of temper, Lord Cornwallis was wont to acknowledge, but never to resent, in any other way—the boldness of her spoken sentiments. These she declared with equal modesty and firmness, whenever their expression became necessary; and, keen as might be her sarcasm, it bore with it its own antidote, in the quiet, subdued, ladylike tone in which it was uttered, and the courteous manner which accompanied it. Grace and beauty may violate many laws with impunity, and praise, not punishment, will still follow the offender.

Such was the happy fortune of Flora Middleton—one of those youthful beauties of Carolina, whose wit, whose sentiment, pride and patriotism, acknowledged equally by friend and foe, exer-

cised a wondrous influence over the events of the war, which is yet to be put on record in a becoming manner.

The poor outcast, Mary Clarkson—a beauty, also, at one time, to her rustic sphere, and one whose sensibilities had been unhappily heightened by the very arts employed by her seducer to effect her ruin—gazed, with a mournful sentiment of satisfaction, at the sweet and picturesque beauty of the scene. Already was she beginning to lose herself in that dreamy languor of thought which hope itself suggests to the unhappy as a means to escape from wo, when she found her reckless betrayer suddenly standing by her side.

“Ha, Mary, you are on the look-out, I see—you have a taste, I know. What think you of the plantations opposite? See how beautifully the lawn slopes up from the river to the foot of the old castle, a glimpse of whose gloomy, frowning visage, meets your eye through that noble grove of water oaks that link their arms across the passage and conceal two thirds—no less—of the huge fabric to which they lead. There now, to the right, what a splendid field of corn—what an ocean of green leaves. On the left do you see a clump of oaks and sycamores—there, to itself, away—a close, dense clump, on a little hillock, itself a sort of emerald in the clearing around it. There stands the vault—the tomb of the Middleton family. Old Middleton himself sleeps there, if he can be said to sleep at all; for they tell strange stories of his nightly rambles after wolves and copper-skins. You may see a small gray spot, like a chink of light, peeping out of the grove—that is the tomb. It is a huge, square apartment—I have been in it more than once—partly beneath and partly above the ground. It has hid many more living than it will ever hold dead men. I owe it thanks for more than one concealment myself.”

“You?”

“Yes! I have had a very comfortable night’s rest in it, all things considered; and the probability is not small that we shall take our sleep in it to-night. How like you the prospect?”

The girl shuddered. He did not care for any other answer, but proceeded.

“In that old cage of Middleton there is a bird of sweetest

song, whom I would set free. Do you guess what I mean, Mary?"

The girl confessed her ignorance.

"You are dull, Mary, but you shall grow wiser before long. Enough for the present. We must set the troop in motion. A short mile below and we find our crossing place, and then—hark you, Mary, you must keep a good look-out to-night. If there was mischief yesterday, it is not yet cured. There is more to-day. I shall expect you to watch to-night, while I *prey*."

He chuckled at the passing attempt at a sort of wit, in which, to do him justice, he did not often indulge, and the point of which his companion did not perceive; then continued—

"Perhaps it should be 'prowl' rather than watch. Though, to prowl well requires the best of watching. You must do both. You *prowl* while I *prey*—do you understand?"

He had given a new form to his phrase, by which he made his humor obvious; and, satisfied with this, he proceeded more seriously—

"Give up your dumps, girl. It will not be the worse for you that things turn out to please me. These rascals must be watched, and I can now trust none to watch them but yourself."

At this confession, her reproachful eyes were turned full and keenly upon him. He had betrayed the trust of the only being in whom he could place his own. What a commentary on his crime, on his cruel indifference to the victim of it! He saw in her eyes the meaning which her lips did not declare.

"Yes, it is even so," he said; "and women were made for this, and they must expect it. Born to be dependants, it is enough that we employ you; and if your expectations were fewer and humbler, your chance for happiness would be far greater. Content yourself now with the conviction that you have a share in my favor, and all will go well with you. The regards of a man are not to be contracted to the frail and unsatisfying compass of one girl's heart; unless, indeed, as you all seem to fancy, that love is the sole business of a long life. Love is very well for boys and girls, but it furnishes neither the food nor the exercise for manhood. If you expect it, you live in

vain. Your food must be the memories of your former luxuries. Let it satisfy you, Mary, that I loved you once."

"Never, Edward—you never loved me; not even when my confidence in your love lost me the love of all other persons. This knowledge I have learned by knowing how I have myself loved, and by comparing my feelings with the signs of love in you. In learning to know how little I have been loved, I made the discovery of your utter incapacity to love."

"And why, pray you?" he demanded, with some pique; but the girl did not answer. He saw her reluctance, and framed another question.

"And why, then, after this discovery, do you still love me, and cling to me, and complain of me?"

"Alas! I know not why I love you. That, indeed, is beyond me to learn. I have sought to know—I have tried to think—I have asked, but in vain, of my own mind and heart. I cling to you because I can cling nowhere else; and you have yourself said that a woman is a dependant—she must cling somewhere! The vine clings to the tree though it knows that all its heart is rotten. As for complaint, God knows I do not come to make it—I do not wish, but I can not help it. I weep and moan from weakness only, I believe, and I shall soon be done moaning."

"Enough—I see which way you tend now. You are foolish, Mary Clarkson, and war with your own peace. Can you never be reconciled to what is inevitable—what you can no longer avoid? Make the best of your condition—what is done can't be amended; and the sooner you show me that you can yield yourself to your fate with some grace, the more certain and soon will be the grace bestowed in turn. You are useful to me, Mary; and as women are useful to men—grown men, mark me—so do they value them. When I say 'useful,' remember the word is a comprehensive one. You may be useful in love, in the promotion of fortune, revenge, ambition, hope, enterprise—a thousand things and objects, in which exercise will elevate equally your character and condition. Enough, now. You must show your usefulness to-night. I go on a business of peril, and I must go alone. But I will take you with me a part of the way, and out of sight of the encampment. To the encampment you

must return, however, and with such precaution as to keep unseen. I need not counsel you any further—your talents clearly lie that way. Love is a sorry business—a sort of sickness—perhaps the natural complaint of overgrown babies of both sexes, who should be dosed with caudle and put to bed as soon after as possible. Do you hear, child? Do you understand?"

Thus substantially ended this conference—the singular terms of which, and the relation between the parties, can only be understood by remembering that sad condition of dependence in which the unhappy girl stood to her betrayer. She was hopeless of any change of fortune—she knew not where to turn—she now had no other objects to which she might presume to cling. She remembered the humbler love of John Bannister with a sigh—the roof and the affections of her father with a thrill, which carried a cold horror through all her veins. A natural instinct turned her to the only one upon whom she had any claim—a claim still indisputable, though it might be scorned or denied by him; and, without being satisfied of the truth of his arguments, she was willing, as he required, to be useful, that she might not be forgotten.

While the troop was preparing to cross the river, it was joined, to the surprise of everybody and the chagrin of its commander, by the refractory lieutenant, Stockton.

He related the events which occurred to him somewhat differently from the truth. According to his version of the story, the guard to whom he had been intrusted was attacked by a superior force, beaten, and probably slain—he himself seasonably escaping to tell the story. It was fancied by himself and friends that his narrow escape and voluntary return to his duty would lessen his offence in the eye of the chief, and probably relieve him from all the consequences threatened in his recent arrest.

But the latter was too jealous of the disaffection prevailing among his men, and too confident in the beneficial influence of sternness among inferiors, to relax the measure of a hair in the exercise of his authority. He at once committed the traitor a close prisoner, to the care of two of his most trusty adherents; and resolutely rejected the applications offered in his behalf by

some of the temporizers—a class of persons of whom the Black Riders, like every other human community, had a fair proportion.

The river was crossed a few miles below the Middleton Barony. A deep thicket in the forest, and on the edge of the river swamp, was chosen for their bivouac; and there, closely concealed from casual observation, the chief of the Black Riders, with his dark banditti, awaited till the approach of night, in a condition of becoming quiet. He then prepared to go forth, alone, on his expedition to the barony; and it was with some surprise, though without suspicion of the cause, that Mary Clarkson perceived, on his setting out, that he had discarded all his customary disguises, and had really been paying some little unusual attention to the arts of the toilet. The black and savage beard and whiskers, as worn by the troopers generally—a massive specimen of which had fallen into the hands of Supple Jack on a previous occasion—had disappeared from his face; his sable uniform had given place to a well-fitting suit of becoming blue; and, of the costume of the troop, nothing remained but the dark belt which encircled his waist.

Mary Clarkson was not naturally a suspicious person, nor of a jealous temper; and the first observation which noticed these changes occasioned not even a surmise in relation to their object. She obeyed his intimation to follow him as he prepared to take his departure; and, availing herself of the momentary diversion of such of the band as were about her at the moment, she stole away and joined him at a little distance from the camp, where she received his instructions as to the game which he required her to play.

The quiet in which Morton had left his followers did not long continue after his departure. The insubordinates availed themselves of his absence to try their strength in a bolder measure than they had before attempted; and a body of them, rising tumultuously, rushed upon the guard to whom Stockton had been given in charge, and, overawing all opposition by their superior numbers, forcibly rescued him from his bonds.

Ensign Darcy was the leader of this party. He had found it no difficulty to unite them in a measure which they boldly as

sumed to be an act of justice, levelled at a species of tyranny to which they ought never to submit. Disaffection had spread much further among his troop than Edward Morton imagined. Disasters had made them forgetful of ancient ties, as well as previous successes. Recently, their spoils had been few and inconsiderable, their toils constant and severe, and their dangers great. This state of things inclined them all, in a greater or less degree, to be dissatisfied; and nothing is so easy to vulgar minds, as to ascribe to the power which governs, all the evils which afflict them.

The leaders of the meeting availed themselves of this natural tendency with considerable art. The more ignorant and unthinking were taught to believe that their chief had mismanaged in a dozen instances, where a different course of conduct would have burdened them with spoils. He had operated on the Wateree and Santee, when the Congaree and the Saluda offered the best field for the exercise of their peculiar practices.

That "frail masquer," to whom the cold-blooded Morton had given in charge the whole espionage which he now kept upon his troop, came upon their place of secret consultation at a moment auspicious enough for the objects of her watch. They had assembled--that is, such of the band (and this involved a majority) as were disposed to rebel against their present leader--in a little green dell, beside a rivulet which passed from the highlands of the forest into the swamp. Here they had kindled a small fire, enough to give light to their deliberations; had lighted their pipes, and, from their canteens, were seasoning their deliberations with the requisite degree and kind of spirit. With that carelessness of all precautions which is apt to follow any decisive departure from the usual restraints of authority, they had neglected to place sentries around their place of conference, who might report the approach of any hostile footstep; or, if these had been placed at the beginning, they had been beguiled by the temptations of the debate and the drink to leave their stations, and take their seats along with their comrades.

Mary Clarkson was thus enabled to steal within easy hearing of all their deliberations. Stockton, with exemplary forbearance and a reserve that was meant to be dignified, did not take much

part in the proceedings. Ensign Darcy, however, was faithful to his old professions, and was the principal speaker. He it was who could best declare what, in particular, had been the omissions of the chief; and by what mistakes he had led the troop from point to point, giving them no rest, little food, and harassing them with constant dangers and alarms.

The extent of his information surprised the faithful listener, and informed her also of some matters which she certainly did not expect to hear.

Darcy was supported chiefly by the huge fellow already known by the name of Barton—the same person who had led the insubordinates in Muggs' cabin, when Edward Morton, at the last moment, sprang up to the rescue of his kinsman. This ruffian, whose violence then had offered opposition to his leader, and could only be suppressed by the show of an equal violence on the part of the latter, had never been entirely satisfied with himself since that occasion. He was one of those humble-minded persons of whom the world is so full, who are always asking what their neighbors think of them; and being a sort of braggart and bully, he was annoyed by a consciousness of having lost some portion of the esteem of his comrades by the comparatively easy submission which he then rendered to his leader. This idea haunted him, and he burned for some opportunity to restore himself in their wonted regards. Darcy discovered this, and worked upon the fool's frailty to such a degree, that he was persuaded to take the lead in the work of mutiny, and to address his specious arguments to those doubtful persons of the gang whom the fox-like properties of the ensign would never have suffered him directly to approach. Their modes of convincing the rest were easy enough, since their arguments were plausible, if not true, and there was some foundation for many of the objections urged against their present commander.

“Here, for example,” said Darcy; “here he comes to play the lover at Middleton place. He dodges about the young woman when it suits him; and either we follow him here, and hang about to keep the rebels from his skirts, or he leaves us where we neither hear nor see anything of him for weeks.

Meanwhile, we can do nothing—we dare not move without him; and if we do any creditable thing, what's the consequence? Lieutenant Stockton there can tell you. He's knocked over like a bullock, and arrested—is attacked by the rebels, makes a narrow escape, comes back like a good soldier, and is put under arrest again, as if no punishment was enough for showing the spirit of a man."

"Ah, yes, that wa'n't right of the captain;" said one of the fellows, with a conclusive shake of the head.

"Yes, and all that jist after the lieutenant had been busy for five days, through storm and rain, looking after him only," was the addition of another.

"It's a God's truth, for sartin, the captain's a mighty changed man now-a-days," said a third.

"He ain't the same person, that's a cl'ar," was the conviction of a fourth; and so on through the tale.

"And who's going to stand it?" cried the fellow Barton, in a voice of thunder, shivering the pipe in his hand by a stroke upon the earth that startled more than one of the doubtful.

"I'll tell you what, men—there's no use to beat about the bush when the thing can be made plain to every men's onderstanding. Here it is. We're in a mighty bad fix at present, any how; and the chance is a great deal worse, so long as we stand here. Here, the whigs are quite too thick for us to deal with. It's either, we must go up to the mountains or get down toward the seaboard. I'm told there's good picking any way. But here we've mighty nigh cleaned out the crib;—there's precious little left. What's to keep us here, I can't see; but it's easy to see what keeps Captain Morton here. He's after this gal of Middleton's; and he'll stay, and peep, and dodge, and come and go, until he gits his own neck in the halter, and may-be our'n too. Now, if you're of my mind, we'll leave him to his gal and all he can get by her, and take horse this very night, and find our way along the Saludah, up to Ninety-Six. That's my notion; and, as a beginning, I'm willing to say, for the first, let Harry Stockton be our captain from the jump."

"Softly, softly, Barton," said the more wily Darcy; "that can hardly be, unless you mean to put the garrison of Ninety-

Six at defiance also. You'll find it no easy matter to show a king's commission for the lieutenant; and it'll be something worse if Ned Morton faces you just at the moment when Balfour, or Rawdon, or Stuart, or Cruger, has you under examination. No, no! There's no way of doing the thing, unless you can show them that Ned Morton's a dead man or a traitor. Now, then, which shall it be?"

"Both!" roared Barton. "I'm for the dead man first. We can go in a body and see for ourselves that he's done up for this world, and we can go in the same body to Cruger at Ninety-Six and show that we want a captain, and can't find a better man than Harry Stockton."

"But he ain't dead," said one of the more simple of the tribe.

"Who says he ain't?" growled the ruffian Barton—"when I say he is? He's dead—dead as a door nail; and we'll prove it before we go to Cruger. Do you suppose I'm going with a lie in my mouth? We must make true what we mean to say."

"You're right, Barton," quietly continued Darcy; "but perhaps 'twould be well, men, to let you know some things more. Now, you must know that Middleton place has been let alone, almost the only house, since the beginning of the war. Old Middleton was a mighty great favorite among the people of all these parts when he was living; and Lord Cornwallis hearing that, he gave orders not to do any harm to it or the people living there. Well, as they were women only, and had neither father, brother, nor son, engaged in the war, there was no provocation to molest them; and so things stand there as quietly as they did in 'seventy-five.' In that house, men, there's more good old stamped plate than you'll find in half the country. I reckon you may get barrels of it, yet not have room for all. Well, there's the jewels of the women. It's a guess of mine only, but I reckon a safe one, when I say that I have no doubt you'll find jewels of Flora Middleton enough to help every man of us to the West Indies, and for six months after. Now, it's a question whether we let the captain carry off this girl with all her jewels, or whether we come in for a share. It's my notion

it's that he's aiming at. He don't care a fig what becomes of us if he can carry off this plunder, and this is the secret of all his doings. I know he's half mad after the girl, and will have her, though he takes her with his claws. I move that we have a hand in the business. It's but to steal up to Brier Park, get round the place, sound a rebel alarm, and give him a shot while he's running. After that, the work's easy. We can then pass off upon the women as a rebel troop, and empty the closets at our leisure."

The temptations of this counsel were exceeding great. It was received without a dissenting voice, though there were sundry doubts, yet to be satisfied, among the more prudent or the more timid.

"But the boy—that strange boy, Henry. He's with him. What's to be done with him?"

Mary Clarkson had been a breathless listener during the whole of this conference. Her emotions were new and indescribable. Heretofore, strange to say, she had never entertained the idea, for a single instant, of Edward Morton loving another woman. She had never, during the marauding life of danger which he pursued, beheld him in any situation which might awaken her female fears. Now, the unreserved communication and bold assertion of Darcy, awakened a novel emotion of pain within her heart, and a new train of reflection in her mind.

"This, then," she mused to herself, as she recollected the conversation that morning with her seducer—"this, then, is the bird that he spoke of—the sweet singing-bird in that gloomy castle, which he determined to release. Strange that I had no fear, no thought of this! But he can not love her—No! no! he has no such nature. It is not possible for him to feel as I have felt."

She strove to listen again, but she heard little more. Her mind had formed a vague impression of his danger, but it was associated with images equally vague in form, but far more impressive in shadow, of the fair woman whose beauty and whose wealth were like supposed to be potential over the rugged chief of that fierce banditti. She began to think, for the first time, **that there was some reason in the complainings of the troop**

but their suggestion to murder the criminal, revived in all its force, if not her old passion, at least her habitual feeling of dependence upon him. The idea of losing for ever the one who, of all the world, she could now seek, was one calculated to awaken all her most oppressive fears; and, with a strong effort at composure, she now bent all her attention to ascertain what were the precise means by which the outlaws proposed to effect their objects. The farther details of Darcy enlightened her on this head, and she was about to rise from her lowly position and hiding-place, and steal away to Brier Place, in order to awaken Morton to his danger, when the inquiry touching her own fate commanded her attention.

“What of the boy, Henry—what shall be done with him? I’m thinking he’s the one that reports everything to the captain. What shall we do with him?”

“Cut his throat, to be sure. He is no use to any of us; and if we silence the captain, we must do for him also. I reckon they’re together now.”

“The getting rid of the boy is a small matter,” said Darcy; “let’s settle about the principal first, and the rest is easily managed. We must set about this affair seriously—there must be no traitors. We must swear by knife, bullet, tree, and halter—the old oath!—there must be blood on it! Whose blood shall it be?”

“Mine!” exclaimed Barton, as he thrust forth his brawny arm to the stroke, and drew up the sleeve. Mary Clarkson was still too much of a woman to wait and witness the horrid ceremonial by which they bound themselves to one another; but she could hear the smooth, silvery voice of Darcy, while she stole away on noiseless feet, as he severally administered the oath, upon the gashed arm of the confederate, to each of the conspirators.

“Swear!”

And the single response of the first ruffian, as he pledged himself, struck terror to her heart and gave fleetness to her footsteps.

“By knife, cord, tree, and bullet, I swear to be true to you, my brothers, in this business;—if I fail or betray you, then let knife, cord, tree, or bullet, do its work!—I swear!”

The terrible sounds pursued her as she fled; but even then she forgot not what she had heard before, of that "sweet singing bird, in that gloomy cage," to both of which she was now approaching with an equal sentiment of curiosity and terror.

CHAPTER XVII.

SOME LOVE PASSAGES AT BRIER PARK.

MEANWHILE, the chief of the Black Riders pursued his noiseless way to the scene of his projected operations. Familiar with the neighborhood, it was not a difficult matter for him to make his progress with sufficient readiness through the gloomy forests. The route had been often trodden by him before—often, indeed, when the fair Flora Middleton little dreamed of the proximity of her dangerous lover—often, when not a star in the sky smiled in encouragement upon his purposes.

The stars were smiling now—the night was without a cloud, unless it were a few of those light, fleecy, transparent robes, which the rising moon seems to fling out from her person, and which float about her pathway in tributary beauty; and she, herself, the maiden queen, making her stately progress through her worshipping dominions, rose with serene aspect and pure splendor, shooting her silver arrows on every side into the thicket, which they sprinkled, as they flew, with sweet, transparent droppings, of a glimmering and kindred beauty with her own. The winds were whist or sleeping. The sacred stillness of the sabbath prevailed in the air and over the earth, save when some nightbird flapped a drowsy wing among the branches which overhung its nest, or, with sudden scream, shrunk from the slanting shafts of light now fast falling through the forests.

Were these tender aspects propitious to the purposes of the outlaw? Were those smiles of loveliness for him only? No! While he pursued the darker passages of the woods, studiously

concealing his person from the light, other and nobler spirits were abroad enjoying it. Love, of another sort than his, was no less busy; and, attended by whatever success, with a spirit far more worthy of the gentler influences which prevailed equally above the path of both.

The outlaw reached the grounds of the ancient barony. He had almost followed the course of the river, and he now stood upon its banks. His path lay through an old field, now abandoned, which was partly overgrown by the lob-lolly, or short-leaved pine. The absence of undergrowth made his progress easy. He soon found himself beside the solemn grove which had grown up, from immemorial time, in hallowed security around the vaulted mansion in which slept the remains of the venerable casique of Congaree—for such was old Middleton's title of nobility. He penetrated the sacred enclosure, and, as he had frequently done before, examined the entrance of the tomb, which he found as easy as usual.

The dead in the wilderness need no locks or bolts for their security. There are no resurrectionists there to annoy them. Edward Conway looked about the vault, but there he did not long remain. Pressing forward, he approached the park and grounds lying more immediately about the mansion. Here, a new occasion for caution presented itself. He found soldiers on duty—sentinels put at proper distances; and, fastened to the swinging limbs of half a dozen trees, as many dragoon horses.

He changed his course and proceeded on another route, with the hope to approach the dwelling without observation; but here again the path was guarded. The watch seemed a strict one. The sentinels were regular, and their responses so timed, as to leave him no prospect of passing through the intervals of their rounds. Yet, even if this had been allowed him, what good could be effected by it? He could not hope, himself unseen, to approach the person he sought. Yet he lingered and watched, in the eager hope to see by whom she was attended. What guest did she entertain?

To know this, his curiosity became intense. He would probably have risked something to have attained this knowledge

but, under the close watch which environed the habitation, his endeavor promised to be utterly hopeless.

This conviction, after a while, drove him back to the tomb, with curses on his lips and fury in his heart. He was not one of those men who had known much, or had learned to endure any disappointment; and his anger and anxiety grew almost to fever when, after successive and frequent attempts to find an open passage to the house, he was compelled to give up the prospect in despair.

The guests seemed in no hurry to withdraw; the lights in the dwelling were bright and numerous. He fancied, more than once, as he continued his survey, that he could hear the tones of Flora's harpsichord, as the winds brought the sounds in the required direction. The twin instincts of hate and jealousy informed him who was the guest of the maiden. Who could it be but Clarence Conway—that kinsman who seemed born to be his bane—to whom he ascribed the loss of property and position; beneath whose superior virtue his spirit quailed, and to a baseless jealousy of whom might, in truth, be ascribed much of the unhappy and dishonorable practices which, so far, he had almost fruitlessly pursued. His was the jealousy rather of hate than love. Perhaps, such a passion as the latter, according to the opinion of Mary Clarkson, could not fill the bosom of one so utterly selfish as Edward Morton. But he had his desires; and the denial of his object—which, to himself, he dignified with the name of love—was quite enough to provoke his wrath to frenzy.

“All, all, has he robbed me of!” he muttered through his closed teeth.—“The love of parents, the regards of friends, the attachment of inferiors, the wealth of kindred, and the love of woman. He stole from me the smiles of my father—the playmate from my side; the rude woodman, whose blind but faithful attachment was that of the hound, abandoned me to cling to him; and now!—but I am not sure of this! *He* is not sure! Flora Middleton has said nothing *yet* to justify his presumption, and I have sown some bitter seeds of doubt in *her* soul, which—if she be like the rest of her sex, and if that devil, or saint, that serves him, do not root up by some miraculous interposition—

will yet bring forth a far different fruit from any which he now hopes to taste. Let her but be shy and haughty—let him but show himself sensitive and indignant—and all will be done. This meeting will prove nothing; and time gained now is, to me, everything. In another week, and I ask no further help from fortune. If I win her not by fair word, I win her by bold deeds; and then I brush the clay of the Congaree for ever from my feet! The waves of the sea shall separate me for ever from the doubts and the dangers, numerous and troublesome, which are increasing around me. This silly girl, too, whom no scorn can drive from my side—I shall then, and then only, be fairly rid of her!”

He threw himself on the stone coping which surrounded the vault, and surrendered himself up to the bitter meditations which a reference to the past life necessarily awakens in every guilty bosom. These we care not to pursue; but, with the reader's permission, will proceed—without heeding those obstructions which drove the chief of the Black Riders to his lurking-place in the vault—to the mansion of the lovely woman whose fortunes, though we have not yet beheld her person, should already have awakened some interest in our regards.

The instinct of hate in the bosom of Edward Morton had informed him rightly. The guest of Flora Middleton was his hated kinsman. He had reached the barony that very evening, and had met with that reception, from the inmates of Brier Park, which they were accustomed to show to the gentlemen of all parties in that time of suspicion and cautious policy. The grandmother was kind and good-natured as ever; but Clarence saw, in Flora Middleton, or fancied that he saw, an air of haughty indifference, which her eyes sometimes exchanged for one of a yet more decided feeling. Could it be anger that flashed at moments from beneath the long dark eyelashes of that high-browed beauty? Was it indignation that gave that curl to her rich and rosy lips; and made her tones, always sweet as a final strain of music, now sharp, sudden, and sometimes harsh?

The eyes of Clarence looked more than once the inquiry which he knew not how to make in any other way; but only once did the dark-blue orbs of Flora encounter his for a pro-

longed moment; and then he thought that their expression was again changed to one of sorrow. After that, she resolutely evaded his glance; and the time, for an hour after his arrival, was passed by him in a state of doubtful solicitude; and by Flora, as he could not help thinking, under a feeling of restraint and excessive circumspection, which was new to both of them, and painful in the last degree to him. All the freedoms of their old intercourse had given way to cold, stiff formalities; and, in place of "Flora" from his lips, and "Clarence" from hers, the forms of address became as rigid and ceremonious between them as the most punctilious disciplinarian of manners, in the most tenacious school of the puritans, could insist upon.

Flora Middleton was rather remarkable than beautiful. She was a noble specimen of the Anglo-Norman woman. Glowing with health, but softened by grace; warmed by love, yet not obtrusive in her earnestness. Of a temper quick, energetic, and decisive; yet too proud to deal in the language of either anger or complaint; too delicate in her own sensibilities to outrage, by heedlessness or haste, the feelings of others. Living at a time, and in a region, where life was full of serious purposes and continual trials, she was superior to those small tastes and petty employments which disparage, too frequently, the understandings of her sex, and diminish, unhappily, its acknowledged importance to man and to society. Her thoughts were neither too nice for, nor superior to, the business and the events of the time. She belonged to that wonderful race of Carolina women, above all praise, who could minister, with equal propriety and success, at those altars for which their fathers, and husbands, and brothers fought—who could tend the wounded, nurse the sick, cheer the dispirited, arm the warrior for the field—nay, sometimes lift spear and sword in sudden emergency, and make desperate battle, in compliance with the requisitions of the soul, nerved by tenderness, and love, and serious duty, to the most masculine exertions—utterly forgetful of those effeminacies of the sex, which are partly due to organization and partly to the arbitrary and, too frequently, injurious laws of society.

In such circumstances as characterized the time of which we write, women as well as men became superior to affectations of

every kind. The ordinary occupations of life were too grave to admit of them. The mind threw off its petty humors with disdain, and where it did not, the disdain of all other minds was sure to attend it. Flora never knew affectations—she was no fine lady—had no humors—no vegetable life; but went on vigorously enjoying time in the only way, by properly employing it. She had her tastes, and might be considered by some persons as rather fastidious in them; but this fastidiousness was nothing more than method. Her love of order was one of her domestic virtues. But, though singularly methodical for her sex, she had no humdrum notions; and, in society, would have been the last to be suspected of being very regular in any of her habits. Her animation was remarkable. Her playful humor—which took no exceptions to simple unrestraint—found no fault with the small follies of one's neighbor; yet never trespassed beyond the legitimate bounds of amusement.

That she showed none of this animation—this humor—on the present occasion, was one of the chief sources of Clarence Conway's disquietude. Restraint was so remarkable in the case of one whose frank, voluntary spirit was always ready with its music, that he conjured up the most contradictory notions to account for it.

"Are you sick?" he asked; "do you feel unwell?" was one of his inquiries, as his disquiet took a new form of apprehension.

"Sick—no! What makes you fancy such a thing, Colonel Conway? Do I look so?"

"No; but you seem dull—not in spirits—something must have happened—"

"Perhaps something has happened, Cousin Clarence." This was the first phrase of kindness which reminded Clarence of old times. He fancied she began to soften. "Cousin Clarence" was one of the familiar forms of address which had been adopted by the maiden some years previously, when, mere children, they first grew intimate together.

"But I am not sick," she continued, "and still less ought you to consider me dull. Such an opinion, Clarence, would annoy many a fair damsel of my acquaintance."

She was evidently thawing.

“But on that head, Flora, you are too secure to suffer it to annoy you.”

“Perhaps I am: but you have certainly lost the knack of saying fine things. The swamps have impaired your politeness. That last phrase has not bettered your speech, since I am at liberty to take it as either a reproach or a compliment.”

Clarence felt that the game was growing encouraging.

“Can there be a doubt which? As a compliment, surely. But let me have occasion for another, the meaning of which shall be less liable to misconstruction. Let me lead you to the harpsichord.”

“Excuse me—not to-night, Clarence;” and her present reply was made with recovered rigidity of manner.

“If not to-night, Flora, I know not when I shall hear you again—perhaps not for months—perhaps, never! I go to Ninety-Six to-morrow.”

Her manner softened as she replied:—

“Ah! do you, Clarence?—and there, at present, lies the whole brunt of the war. I should like to play for you, Clarence, but I can not. You must be content with music of drum and trumpet for a while.”

“Why, Flora—you never refused me before?”

“True—but——”

“But what!—only one piece, Flora.”

“Do not ask me again. I can not—I *will* not play for you to-night; nay, do not interrupt me, Clarence: my harpsichord *is* in tune, and I am *not* seeking for apologies. I tell you I *will not* play for you to-night, and perhaps I will never play for you again.”

The young colonel of cavalry was astounded.

“Flora—Flora Middleton!” was his involuntary exclamation. The venerable grandmother echoed it, though her tones were those of exhortation, not of surprise.

“Flora—Flora, my child—what would you do?” she continued with rebuking voice and warning finger.

“Nay, mother,” said the maiden assuringly—“let me have my own way in this. I like frankness, and if Clarence be what he has always seemed—and we always believed him—he will

like it too. I am a country-girl, and may be permitted a little of the simplicity—you call it bluntness, perhaps—which is natural to one.”

“Flora, what can be the meaning of this?” demanded the lover with unaffected earnestness and astonishment. “In what have I offended you? For there is some such meaning in your words.”

The maiden looked to her grandmother, but did not answer; and Conway, though now greatly excited, could readily perceive that she labored under feelings which evidently tried her confidence in herself, and tested all her strength. A deep suffusion overspread her cheek, the meaning of which, under other circumstances, he might have construed favorably to his suit. Meanwhile, the old lady nodded her head with a look of mixed meaning, which one, better read in the movements of her mind, might have found to signify, “Go through with what you have begun, since you have already gone so far. You can not halt now.”

So, indeed, did it seem to be understood by the maiden; for she instantly recovered herself and continued:—

“Give me your arm, Clarence, and I will explain all. I am afraid I have overtaken myself; but the orphan, Clarence Conway, must assert her own rights and character, though it may somewhat impair, in the estimation of the stronger sex, her pretensions to feminine delicacy.”

“You speak in mysteries, Flora,” was the answer of the lover: “surely the orphan has no wrong to fear at my hands; and what rights of Flora Middleton are there, disputed or denied by me, which it becomes her to assert with so much solemnity, and at such a fearful risk?”

“Come with me, and you shall know all.”

She took his arm, and, motioning her head expressively to her grandmother, led the way to the spacious portico, half-embowered by gadding vines—already wanton with a thousand flowers of the budding season—which formed the high and imposing entrance to the ancient dwelling. The spot was one well chosen for the secrets of young lovers—a home of buds, and blossoms, and the hallowing moonlight—quiet above in the

sky, quiet on the earth; a scene such as prompts the mind to dream that there may be griefs and strifes at a distance—rumors of war and bloodshed in barbarian lands, and of tempests that will never trouble ours. Clarence paused as they emerged into the sweet natural shadows of the spot.

“How have I dreamed of these scenes, Flora—this spot—these flowers, and these only! My heart has scarcely forgotten the situation of a single bud or leaf. All appears now as I fancy it nightly in our long rides and longer watches in the swamp.”

She answered with a sigh:—

“Can war permit of this romance, Clarence? Can it be possible that he who thinks of blood, and battle, and the neighborhood of the foe, has yet a thought to spare to ladies’ bowers, vines, blossoms, and such woman-fancies as make up the pleasures of her listless moods, and furnish, in these times, her only, and perhaps her best society.”

“I think of them as tributary to her only, Flora. Perhaps I should not have thought of these, but that you were also in my thoughts.”

“No more, Clarence; and you remind me of the explanation which I have to make, and to demand. Bear with me for a moment; it calls for all my resolution.”

She seated herself upon a bench beneath the vines, and motioned him to a place beside her. After a brief delay—a tribute to the weakness of her sex—she began as follows:—

“Clarence Conway, before I saw you to-night, I had resolved henceforward to regard and treat you as the most indifferent stranger that ever challenged the hospitality of my father’s dwelling. But I have not been able to keep my resolution. Your coming to-night reminds me so much of old times, when I had every reason to respect—why should I not say it?—to like you, Clarence, that I feel unwilling to put you off as a stranger, without making such explanations as will justify me in this course. Briefly, then, Clarence Conway, some things have reached my ears, as if spoken by you, and of me—such things as a vain young man might be supposed likely to say of any young woman who has suffered him to think that she had thoughts for nothing beside himself. I will not tell you, Clar-

ence, that I believed all this. I could not dare—I did not wish to believe it; but, I thought it not impossible that you had spoken of me, perhaps too familiarly, without contemplating the injury you might do me and—do yourself. Now, if you knew anything of a maiden's heart, Clarence Conway—nay, if you knew anything of mine—you would readily imagine what I must have felt on hearing these things. The burning blushes on my cheeks now, painfully as I feel them, were as nothing to the galling sting of the moment when I heard this story."

"But you did not believe it, Flora!"

"Believe it? no! not all—at least—"

"None! none!" repeated the youth, with stern emphasis, as he laid his hand upon her arm, and looked her in the face with such an expression as falsehood never yet could assume.

"That I should speak this of you, and that you should believe it, Flora Middleton, are things which I should have fancied equally impossible. Need I say that it is all false—thoroughly false; that your name has never passed my lips but with feelings of the profoundest reverence; that—but I blush too, at the seeming necessity of saying all this, and saying it to you: I thought—I could have hoped, Flora Middleton, that you, at least, knew me better than to doubt me for a moment, or to listen with credulous ear to such a miserable slander. The necessity of this explanation, next to the sorrow of having given pain to you, is the keenest pang which you could make me suffer."

"Be not angry, Clarence," she said gently—"remember what society exacts of my sex—remember how much of our position depends upon the breath of man;—our tyrant too often—always our sole judge while we dwell upon the earth. His whisper of power over us, is our death;—the death of our pride—of that exclusiveness of which he, himself, is perhaps, the most jealous being; and whether the tale of his abuse of this power, be true or not—think how it must wound and humble—how it must disturb the faith, with the judgment, of the poor woman, who feels that she is always, to some degree, at the mercy of the irresponsible despot whom she must fear, even when she can not honor. I mention this to excuse the promptness of my resentment. I tell you, Clarence Conway, that

woman of my frank nature, is compelled to be resentful, if she would subdue the slanderer to silence. Slander is of such mushroom growth, yet spreads over so large a surface, that it is needful at once to check the first surmises, and doubts, and insinuations with which it begins its fungous, but poisonous existence. My feeling on this subject—my keen jealousy of my own position—a jealousy the more natural, as, from the frankness of my disposition, I am frequently liable to be misunderstood, has possibly led me to do you injustice. Even when this reached my ears, I did not believe it altogether. I thought it not improbable, however, that you had spoken of me among your friends, and——”

“Forgive me that I interrupt you, Flora. I feel too much pain at what you say—too much annoyance—to suffer you to go on. Let me finish my assurances. I shall employ but few words, and they shall be final, or—nothing! I have no friends to whom I should ever speak a falsehood of any kind—none to whom I would ever utter, with unbecoming familiarity, the name of Flora Middleton. If I have spoken of you in the hearing of others, it has been very seldom; only, perhaps, when it seemed needful for me to do so—perhaps never more than once; and then never in disparagement of that modesty which is the noblest characteristic of your sex. But!——”

He paused! He was reminded at this moment of the late conference which he had with Edward Conway. In that conference he had certainly asserted a superior right, over his kinsman, to approach Flora Middleton with love. This assertion, however, only contemplated the relative position of the brothers, one to the other; and was accompanied by an express disclaimer, on the part of Clarence, of any influence over the maiden herself; but the recollection of this circumstance increased the difficulties in the way of an explanation, unless by the adoption of a single and very simple—but a very direct course—which is always apt to be regarded as one of great peril by all youthful lovers. Clarence Conway was one of those men who know only the Alexandrine method of getting through the knots of the moral Gordius.

“I have spoken of you, Flora—nay, I have spoken of you

and in reference to the most delicate subject in the history of a woman's heart. Thus far I make my confession, and will forbear with your permission saying more—saying what I mean to say—until I have craved of you the name of him who has thus ventured to defame me.”

“I can not tell you, Clarence.”

“Can not, Flora?—Can not!—”

“*Will not*, is what I should say, perhaps; but I have used those words once already, to-night, when I felt that they must give you pain; and I would have forborne their use a second time. I can, certainly, tell you from whom I heard these things, but I will not.”

“And why not, Flora? Would you screen the slanderer?”

“Yes!—For a very simple reason;—I would not have you fight him, Clarence.—”

“Enough, Flora, that I know the man. None could be so base but the person whom you know as Edward Conway, but whom I know——”

He paused—he could not make the revelation.

“Ha! Tell me, Clarence—what know you of Edward Conway, except that he is your near kinsman?”

“That which makes me blush to believe that he is my father's son. But my knowledge is such, Flora, that I will not tell it you. It differs from yours in this respect, that, unhappily, it is true—all true—terribly true! Know, then, that, to him—to Edward Conway—long ago, did I declare, what I once already presumed to declare to you—that I loved you—”

“Let me not hear you, Clarence,” said the maiden timidly, rising as she spoke. But, he took her hand, and with a gentle pressure restored her to her seat beside him.

“I must. It is now necessary for my exculpation. Before he saw you, he knew that I loved you, and was the faithless *confidante* of my unsuspecting affections. He betrayed them. He sought you thenceforward with love himself. Words of anger—blows, almost—followed between us; and though we did not actually reach that issue, yet suspicion, and jealousy, and hate, are now the terms on which we stand to each other. He poured this cursed falsehood into your ears, I have reason

to think, but ten days ago. Within the same space of time I have saved his life. To him, only, have I spoken of you in terms liable to misrepresentation. I did not speak of having claims upon you, Flora, but upon him;—I charged him with treachery to *my* trust, though I did not then dream that he had been the doubly-dyed traitor that I have since found him."

"Let us return to the parlor, Clarence."

"No, Flora," said the youth, with mild and mournful accents. "No, Flora Middleton, let our understanding be final. Tomorrow I go to Ninety-Six, and God knows what fate awaits me there. You, perhaps, can assist in determining it, by the response which you make to-night. I wrote you by John Bannister, Flora—I know that you received that letter—yet you sent me no answer."

"Let me confess, also, Clarence:—But three days before I received your letter, I was told of this."

"Ha! Has the reptile been so long at his web?" exclaimed the youth—"But I will crush him in it yet."

"Beware! Oh! Clarence Conway, beware of what you say. Beware rash vows and rash performances. Do you forget that the man of whom you speak is your brother—the son of your father?"

"Why should I remember that which he has himself forgotten;—nay, which he repudiates with bitterest curses, and which the black deeds of his wretched life—of which, as yet, you know nothing—have repudiated more effectually than all. But I would not speak of him now, Flora. I would, if possible, exclude all bitterness from my thought—as in speaking to you, I would exclude it from my lips. Hear me, Flora. You know the service I am sent upon. You can imagine some of its dangers. The employment now before me is particularly so. The strife along the Saluda is one of no ordinary character. It is a strife between brothers, all of whom have learned to hate as I do, and to seek to destroy with an appetite of far greater anxiety. The terms between whig and tory, now, are death only. No quarter is demanded—none is given."

"I know! I know! Say no more of this horrible condition of things. I know it all."

“The final issue is at hand, and victory is almost in our grasp. The fury of the tories increases with their despair. They feel that they must fly the country, and they are accordingly drenching it with blood. I speak to you, therefore, with the solemnity of one who may never see you more. But if we do meet again, Flora, dear Flora—if I survive this bloody campaign—may I hope that then—these doubts all dispersed, these slanders disproven—you will look on me with favor; you will smile—you will be mine; mine only—all mine!”

The tremors of the soft white hand which he grasped within his own assured the lover of the emotion in her breast. Her bosom heaved for an instant, but she was spared the necessity of making that answer, which, whether it be “no” or “yes,” is equally difficult for any young damsel’s utterance. A sharp, sudden signal whistle was sounded from without at this moment;—once—twice—thrice;—a bustle was heard among the few dragoons who had been stationed by the prudent commander about the premises; and, a moment after, the subdued tones of the faithful Supple Jack apprized his captain that danger was at hand.

“Speak!—speak to me, Flora, ere I leave you—ere I leave you, perhaps, for ever! Speak to me!—tell me that I have not prayed for your love and devoted myself in vain. Send me not forth, doubtful or hopeless. If it be——”

Sweet, indeed, to his heart, were the tremulous beatings which he distinctly heard of hers. They said all that her lips refused to say. Yet never was heart more ready to respond in the affirmative—never were lips more willing to declare themselves. One reflection alone determined her not to do so. It was a feeling of feminine delicacy that prompted her, for the time, to withhold the confession of feminine weakness.

“What!”—such was the reflection as it passed through her mind—“bring him to these shades to hear such a confession! Impossible! What will he think of me? No! no!—not to-night. Not *here*, at least!”

She was still silent, but her agitation evidently increased; yet not more than that of her lover. The summons of the faith-

ful scout was again repeated. The circumstances admitted of no delay.

“Oh, speak to me, dearest Flora. Surely you can not need any new knowledge of what I am, or of the love that I bear you. Surely, you can not still give faith to these wretched slanders of my wretched brother!”

“No! no!” she eagerly answered. “I believe you to be true, Clarence, and as honorable as you are faithful. But in respect to what you plead, Clarence, I can not answer now—not *here*, at least. Let me leave you now!”

“Not yet, Flora! But one word.”

“Not *here*, Clarence—not *here*!” with energy.

“Tell me that I may hope!”

“I can tell you nothing now, Clarence—not a word *here*.”

Her lips were inflexible; but if ever hand yet spoke the meaning of its kindred heart, then did the soft, shrinking hand which he grasped nervously in his own, declare the meaning of hers. It said “hope on—love on!” as plainly as maiden finger ever said it yet; and this was all—and, perhaps, enough, as a first answer to a young beginner—which she then vouchsafed him, as she glided into the apartment. In the next moment the faithful Supple Jack, clearing, at a single bound, the height from the terrace to the upper balcony, in which the interview had taken place, breathed into the half oblivious senses of his commander the hurried words—

“The British and tories are upon us, Clarence! We have not a moment to lose!”

CHAPTER XVIII.

A CONFERENCE IN THE TOMB.

THESE words at once awoke the young soldier to activity. Clarence Conway was not the man to become subdued by "Amaryllis in the shade," nor meshed, fly-like, in the "tangles of any Næra's hair." A new mood possessed him with the communication of his faithful scout, who, by the way, also performed the duties of his lieutenant.

"Get your men instantly to horse, Jack Bannister, and send them forward on the back track to the river," was the prompt command of the superior.

"Done a'ready, colonel," was the respectful answer.

"Good;—and, now, for your report."

The examination which followed was brief, rapid, and comprehensive. Though fond of long speeches usually, Jack Bannister was yet the model of a man of business. He could confine himself, when needful, to the very letter.

"From whence came the enemy?—above or below?"

"Below, sir."

"What force do your scouts report to you?"

"Large!—I reckon it's Rawdon's whole strength; but the advance only is at hand."

"Rawdon, ha! He goes then to the relief of 'Ninety Six.' I trust he goes too late. But *our* business is scarce with him. What cavalry has he? Did you learn *that*?"

"It's mighty small, I'm thinking; but we can't hear for sartin. It's had a monstrous bad cutting up, you know, at Orangeburg, and don't count more, I reckon, than sixty men, all told. That's the whole force of Coffin, I know."

"We must manage that, then! It's the only mode in which we can annoy Rawdon and baffle his objects. Between 'Brier

Park' and 'Ninety-Six' we should surely pick up all of his flock — and *must*? Are the scouts in? All?"

"All but Finley—I'm jub'ous he's cut off below. They've caught him napping, I reckon."

"If so, he has paid before this, the penalty of his nap. We must be careful not to incur like penalties. We have nothing to do but to draw off quietly from Brier Park, taking the back track by the river, and plant ourselves in waiting a few miles above. There are a dozen places along the road where we can bring them into a neat ambush, which will enable us to empty their saddles. What do the lower scouts say of their order of march?"

"Precious little! They had to run for it—Coffin's cavalry scouring pretty considerably ahead. But they keep up a mighty quick step. It's a forced march, and his cavalry is a mile or more in advance."

"They march without beat of drum?"

"Or blast of bugle;—so quiet you can hardly hear the clatter of a sabre. Nothing but the heavy tread of their feet."

"Enough. As you have sent the troop forward, let your scouts file off quietly after them. Keep close along the river, and let them all be in saddle when I reach them at the end of the causey. Rawdon will probably make the 'Barony' his place of rest to-night. He must have marched forty miles since last midnight. Pity we had not known of this! That fellow, Finley—he was a sharp fellow, too—but no matter! Go you now, Bannister. Have my horse in readiness by the old vault; and let your scouts, in filing off, dismount and lead their horses, that there may be no unnecessary clatter of hoofs. Away, now—I will but say farewell to Mrs. Middleton and Flora."

"Tell 'em good-by for me, too, colonel, if you please; for they've always been mighty genteel in the way they've behaved to me, and I like to be civil."

Clarence promised him, and the excellent fellow disappeared, glad to serve the person whom he most affectionately loved. Clarence then proceeded to the apartment in which the ladies were sitting, and suffering under the natural excitement produced by the intelligence, always so startling in those days, of

the approach of a British army. Brief words at parting were allowed to the lovers; and whether Mrs. Middleton conjectured, or had been told by Flora, of what had taken place between them, the old lady was civil enough to leave the couple together without the restraint of her maternal presence. Preliminaries, at such moments, among sensible people, are usually dispensed with.

“You will not answer me, Flora?”

“Spare me Clarence—not now.”

“Not now! Think, dearest Flora, of the circumstances under which I leave you: the force that drives me from your presence! Remember the danger that follows my footsteps, and the dangers which I am bound to seek. I may never again behold you—may lose, in the skirmish of the dawn, the hope, the fear, the thousand dreams and anxieties which now possess and alternately afflict and delight my heart. Let me not go forth trembling with this doubt. But one word—one only—which shall fill my bosom with new spirit, strength and courage. Speak, dearest Flora—but a single word!”

“Ah, Clarence, urge me not! What I should say might have a very different effect upon you; might subdue your spirit, disarm your strength; make your heart to waver in its courage; might——”

“Enough! enough! I ask for no other answer!” he exclaimed, with bright eyes and a bounding spirit. “Nothing *could* do that but the fear of losing a treasure suddenly won, and so precious, over all things, in my sight. But I trust that this sweet conviction, dear Flora, will have no such effect upon my spirit. If, before, I fought only for my country, I now fight for love and country; and the double cause should occasion double courage! Farewell—farewell! God be with you, and his angels watch over you, as fondly, as faithfully, and with more ability to serve you, than your own Clarence. Farewell, farewell!”

Hastily seizing her hand, he carried it to his lips with a fervent pressure; then, elastic with new emotions of delight, that made him heedless and thoughtless of the danger, he hurried downward into the court-yard below. The area lay in utter

silence. The scouts had gone, the sentinels withdrawn; and, with a single glance up to the apartment where he had left the lady of his love, the youthful partisan took his way after his lieutenant. Let us only follow him so far as to look after other agents in our narrative, who lie upon his route, and whom we may no longer leave unnoticed.

Long and wearisome, indeed, had been the hour of anxious watch which the chief of the Black Riders had maintained over the barony, in his gloomy hiding-place. Twenty times, in that period, had he emerged from the tomb, and advanced toward the dwelling of the living. But his course was bounded by the military restraints which the timely prudence of Conway, and the watchfulness of Bannister, had set around the mansion. Vainly, from the cover of this or that friendly tree, did his eyes strain to pierce the misty intervals, and penetrate the apartment whose gay lights and occasional shadows were all that were distinguishable. Disappointed each time, he returned to his place of concealment, with increasing chagrin; plunging, in sheer desperation, down into its awful and dark recesses, which to him presented no aspects of either awe or darkness.

At length, however, the sound of a movement near the mansion awakened in him a hope that his tedious watch would shortly end. Slight though the noises were, under the cautious management of Bannister, the calling in of the sentries, and their withdrawal, necessarily reached his ears, and prepared him for the movement of the troop which followed. Each trooper leading his steed with shortened rein, they deployed slowly beside the tomb, little dreaming whom it harbored; and the outlaw was compelled, during their progress, to observe the most singular quiet.

The vaulted habitations of the dead were no unfrequent hiding-places in those days for the living, and, to a trooper, trained in the swamp warfare, to convert every situation of obscurity and darkness into a place of retreat or ambush, the slightest circumstance or movement on his part, he well knew, would result in their sudden search of his gloomy house of refuge. Through a chink in the decaying floor of the vault, he watched their progress; and when they had gone from sight,

swallowed up in the deep blank of the forest along the margin of the river, he once more ascended to the light.

His path now promised to be free. He knew the troop to be one of his brother's regiment—a small though famous squadron—"The Congaree Blues"—proverbial for bold riding, happy horsemanship, and all of that characteristic daring which everywhere marked the southern cavalry throughout the war. The uniform he readily distinguished, though not the persons. He fancied that his brother was among them; and, hearing no further sound, with that impatience which was natural to his desires, and which was necessarily increased by the restraints to which they had been subjected, he prepared to go boldly forward to the mansion.

But the coast was not yet clear. He had advanced a few paces only, when he heard the faint, but mellow tones of a distant bugle, rising and falling in sweet harmony with the light zephyrs which bore them to his ears. These sounds now furnished him with the true reason for his brother's flight, and this was of a sort which should not have troubled him. The enemies of his kinsman, according to his profession, were not unlikely to be his friends; yet the business upon which the heart of Edward Morton was set, and the position in which he then stood, were such as to make the presence of a British force almost as little desirable to him as had been that of his brother. His present objects admitted of no friendships. Thoroughly selfish, they could only be prosecuted at the expense of the cause in which he was engaged, and at the sacrifice of that band with which, for life and death, his own life—if his oath to them were of any value—was solemnly and indissolubly connected.

Bitterly, therefore, and with renewed vexation, did he listen to the sweet but startling tones of that sudden trumpet. Cursing the course of events which, so far, that night, seemed destined to baffle his purposes, he stood for a few moments, in doubt, upon the spot where the sounds first struck his ears; hesitating whether to go forward boldly, or at once return to his place of safety.

To adopt the former course, was, in his present undisguised condition, to declare to Flora Middleton the fact, which he had

hitherto studiously concealed from her knowledge, of his connection with the British cause. Such a revelation, he well knew, would, in the mind of one so religiously devoted to the whig party as was that maiden, operate most unfavorably against his personal pretensions, on the success of which, he still flattered himself, he might, in some degree, rely.

While he doubted and deliberated on his course, he was startled by other sounds, which warned him of the necessity of a prompt determination. The heavy footsteps of a man, whose tread was measured like that of a soldier, were heard approaching through the grove that extended from the dwelling in the direction of the tomb; and the outlaw moved hurriedly back to the shelter he had left.

He was scarcely rapid enough in his movements. The person approaching was no other than Clarence Conway. He had just parted, as we have seen, with Flora Middleton. Her last words were still sounding in his ears like some sweet, melancholy music, which the language of one heart delivers, in love, for the consolation of another. The last pressure of her hand seemed still to make itself felt from his own, upward, to his heart, with a sensation which carried a thrill of joy to its deepest recesses. With the bugle of the enemy sounding on the track behind him, he had then no thought, no feeling for the enemy—and, certainly, no fear. Foes, at that moment, if not forgotten, awakened no emotion in his bosom which a smile of indifference upon his lips did not sufficiently express.

From musings, the dreamy languor of which may be readily imagined, he was awakened by the sudden glimpse he had caught of his kinsman's person. The mere human outline was all that he beheld, and this for an instant only. At first, he was disposed to fancy that it was one of his own dragoons, all of whom had gone forward in that direction, and one of whom might have been left in the hurry of his comrades, or possibly detached on some special service.

But the retreat of the outlaw had been too precipitate—too like a flight—not to awaken instantly the suspicions of the partisan. To challenge the fugitive by the usual summons was probably to alarm his own enemies, and was a measure not to

be thought of. To hurry in pursuit was the only mode of ascertaining his object, and this mode was put in execution as promptly as resolved upon.

The partisan rushed forward, but the object of his pursuit was no longer to be seen. The old field, on one hand, was bare and desolate—the park, on the left, did not attract the youth's attention. Obviously, the melancholy grove which led to and environed the ancient vault, was that to which the footsteps of the fugitive would most naturally incline. Into the deep shadows of this he pressed forward, until he stood beside the tomb. Then, and not till then, did he speak, challenging the fugitive to "stand" whom he could no longer see.

The summons was heard the moment after the outlaw had buried himself in his place of concealment. The tones of his brother's voice arrested the outlaw. That voice awakened all his rage and hate, while reminding him of his gage of battle; and when he remembered that Clarence Conway had but that instant left the presence of the woman whom he sought, and whom he had not been permitted to see—when he remembered that he was his hated rival, and when he thought that his lips might even then be warm with the fresh kisses of hers—the feelings in his heart were no longer governable! Uniting with that gnawing impatience, which had grown almost to a fever, and was a frenzy, under his late constraint, they determined him against all hazards; and, darting from the vault, he answered the summons of his foe with a hiss of scorn and defiance.

"Stand thou!—Clarence Conway—wretch and rebel! We are met on equal terms at last."

"Ay," cried the other, nowise startled at the sudden apparition; "well met!" and as the outlaw sprang forward from the tomb with uplifted dagger, Clarence met him with his own.

A moment's collision only had ensued, when the latter struck his weapon into the mouth of his enemy, with a blow so forceful as to precipitate him back into the cavern which he had just left. Clarence sprang into the tomb after him, and there, in the deep darkness of the scene, among the mouldering coffins and dry bones of the dead, the brothers grappled in deadly desperation.

Death, and the presence of its awful trophies, had no terrors for either. The living passions of the heart were triumphant over their threatening shadows, and the struggle was renewed between the two with a degree of hate and fury that found increase rather than diminution from the solemn and dark associations by which they were encompassed. But few words were spoken, and those only in the breathing intervals which their struggles left them. The language of the outlaw was that of vituperation and hate; that of Conway, an indignation natural to feelings which revolted at the brutal and sanguinary rage of his enemy, tempered, at the same time, with equal scorn and resolution.

In Clarence Conway, the chief of the Black Riders saw only the imbodyed form of all the evil influences which he had felt or fancied from his boyhood; the long-engendered envy and malice of twenty years finding, at length, its unqualified expression. In his eyes, he was the hateful rival who had beguiled from him, with equal facility, the regards of parents, the attachments of friends, the smiles of fortune, and the love of woman.

Clarence, on the other hand, no longer saw the kinsman of his youth—the son of the same father—in the person of the outlaw; or, if he remembered the ties of blood at all, it was only to warm his hostility the more against one who had so commonly outraged, and so cruelly dishonored them! It was as the betrayer of his country, and the associate of the most savage outlaws that ever arrayed themselves against her peace and liberty, that he struck, and struck with fatal design to destroy and extirpate! Nor need it be denied that these motives were stimulated by the conviction that he himself fought for life, with a personal foe who had threatened him with all the haunting dangers of an enduring and bloody enmity—a hatred born without cause, and nourished without restraint—warmed by bad passions, mean rivalry, and a suspicious selfishness, which no labor of love could render reasonable, and which could only finally cease in the death of one or both of the combatants. The incoherent language, the broken words, and fiendish threatenings of the outlaw, left nothing on this subject to conjecture; and while the two writhed together in their narrow apartment

the otherwise horrible stillness of their strife might be thought relieved and rendered human by the bursts of passion and invective which fell the while from the lips of both. But these caused no interruption to the conflict. They fought only with daggers, though both were provided with sword and pistol. A mutual sense of the proximity of those whom neither wished to alarm, rendered them careful not to employ weapons which could draw a third party to the scene of strife. Besides, the dagger was the only weapon that might be employed in their limited area with any propriety. This weapon, deadly in the close struggle as it usually is, was rendered less effectual in the imperfect light of the place, and by the baffling readiness of their rival skill. They both felt that the struggle must be fatal, and did not, accordingly, suffer their rage to disarm their providence and caution. Still, several wounds had been given and received on either side. One of these had penetrated the right arm of the partisan, but the point of the dagger had been diverted, and the wound was one of the flesh only, not deep nor disabling. The outlaw had been less fortunate. That first blow, which he had received in the mouth at the entrance of the vault, had necessarily influenced the combat as first blows usually do; and, though not of serious hurt, for the point of the weapon found resistance against his clenched teeth, two of which were broken, still it seriously affected the relations of the parties. The one it encouraged, the other it provoked to increased anger, which impaired his coolness. A second and third wound in each of his arms had followed in the vault, and a moment came in which a fourth promised to be final.

Clarence had grappled closely with his kinsman, had borne him backward, and succeeded in prostrating him, face upward, upon the pile of coffins which rose in the centre of the tomb. Here, with his knee upon the breast of his enemy, one hand upon his throat, and the other bearing on high the already dripping steel, the stroke and the death seemed equally inevitable. So, indeed, the outlaw considered it; and the language of his lips at that moment of his greatest peril, spoke more decisively for his manhood than, perhaps, it had ever done before.

“Strike!” he cried; “I fear you not! The devil you have

served has served you faithfully in turn! I ask you not for mercy—I loathe you, Clarence Conway—I loathe and curse you to the last. Strike then, as I should have stricken you, had the chance fallen to my lot.”

The weakness of a human and a social sentiment made the youth hesitate. He shivered as he thought upon the ties of blood—ties which *he* could never entirely forget, however much they might be scorned by his profligate brother. He was still his father’s son—he would have spared—he wished to spare him.

While he hesitated, a new and desperate effort was made by the prostrate outlaw. Hope and fear united for a last and terrible struggle. He half rose—he grasped the arm with which Clarence held him, with demoniac strength, and flinging himself upward, with the exercise of all that muscle which he possessed in almost equal degree with his brother, he had nearly shaken himself free from the hold which the latter had taken upon him.

It was then that the dagger of Clarence descended!—then, when it became obvious that no indulgence could be given to his foe without danger to himself. But the blow, even then, was not final—not fatal. It touched no vital region. The desperate effort of the outlaw, though it failed in its object, effected another, which operated to his partial safety. The mouldering coffins upon which he was stretched yielded beneath his gigantic struggles, sank under the violence and pressure, and, ere the blow reached the heart of the threatened victim, came down, with a fearful crash, in fragments upon the damp floor of the vault. The dagger-point barely grazed the breast of the falling man; and Clarence, still grappling with his foe and grappled by him in turn, was dragged downward to the earth, and the two lay together for an instant, without strife, among the crushed and bleached bones of bygone generations. Both were breathless, but there was no mitigation of their fury. With some difficulty they scrambled to their feet, separated for a moment, but only, in the next, to renew their terrible embrace.

“Let there be an end to this!” said Morton, hoarsely. “Let us go forth into the moonlight; we can do nothing here, it seems.”

“Ay, anywhere!” was the reply of the other; “but let it be quickly: I have not a moment to spare.”

“A moment should suffice for either, and would have done so, had there been sufficient light for the business. So far, Clarence Conway, you have had the matter all to yourself. But there is a day for every dog, they tell us; and, though still there be no daylight, I trust that my day is at hand. Lead the way; I am ready. Let the dagger still be the weapon. It is a sure one, and makes but little clatter. Besides, it brings us so much the nigher to each other, which is brotherly, you know.”

The sterner, perhaps the nobler, features of the outlaw stood out in bolder relief at the moment which he himself believed was one of the greatest danger. Morton was not deficient in animal courage. It was only less frequently apparent, because, like the Italian, he preferred the practice of a subtler agent. A fierce laugh concluded his attempt at playfulness. To this the heart of Clarence gave back no response. Though not less fearless than his brother—nay, though greatly excited by the strife—it yet had, to his mind, the aspect of a horror which he could not complacently behold. The few moments consumed in this brief dialogue had brought him back to those reflections which the provocation of the strife had almost wholly banished. But he suffered no mental or moral scruples, at such a moment, to impair his manhood.

“I too am ready,” was his only answer as he left the vault. He was followed by the outlaw; and there, in another moment, they stood together on the green sward before the tomb, fiercely confronting each other with eyes of mortal hate—utterly unmoved by the pure and placid smiles of that maiden moon whose blessed light they were about to employ for the most unblest purpose.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE COMBAT OF THE BROTHERS.

THE ancient additaments for the groundwork of the grand or terrible, the wild or warlike, would have borne aspects not unlike their own. Ordinarily, the painter of the darker passions is very apt to accompany their explosion with a sympathetic action on the part of the natural world. The hero, just before committing the deed of blood, stalks upon the scene, surrounded by the gloomy shadows of the night; storm and thunder attend upon his footsteps, and the fiery eyes of the rebuking heaven glare along his path in flashes of impetuous lightning. A voice of warning is heard to mutter in the sky. The bloody dagger, the awful sign of the crime which is already acted in the mind of the criminal, hangs in the air above him, and marshals him the way that he must follow; while the ghosts of the past reappear, shaking their gory locks, to impede or to precipitate the ghost-like progress of the future. All things are made to act in harmony with that terrible passion which has already thrown over the heart of the possessor the uniform "brown horror" which distinguishes its own unvarying aspect. There is no blue in the transparent softness of the noonday sky; there is no living green in the fresh sward of the luxuriant earth; the songs of the one, and the mellow voices of the other, receive their savage or sad tones wholly from the desolate or depraved soul which speaks in the bosom of the fated actor. All forms and features, sights and sounds, are made to correspond with his prevailing passion; and the hues of sky and land become naturally incarnadined by the bloody mood which governs in his soul. The voices which he hears, whether of earth or sky, are only such as rise from the groaning victims, who start, perhaps, from the embrace of slumber, to sleep in that of death.

But, very different from these were the auxiliary aspects of

that scene upon which the rival kinsmen were about to contend. Never was night more beautiful, more uniformly beautiful and tender, in any one of its thousand attributes and agents. The moon, almost at her full, was high above the forest tops, and hallowing its deep and dim recesses with innumerable streams of glory from her own celestial fountain. Few were the clouds that gathered about her path, and these, sharing in her gifts of beauty, became tributary to her lustrous progress. A gentle breeze, rising from the east, accompanied her march, and the tall pines swayed to and fro beneath its pressure, yielding a whispering music, like those faint utterances of a sweet complaint which are made by the curling billows of the sea, when they break and die away in a languid struggle with the shore. These breathings found fit fellowship in the gentle murmurs of the Congaree, as it rippled away on its sleepless path, at a little distance from the scene of strife. Lighted by the moon above, its winding form might be seen, in silvery glimpses, where the vistas of the woods had been opened by that tasteful art which had presided over the barony from its first settlement. Nothing was dark, nothing sad, stern, or terrible, but the human agents of the scene.

There they stood, frowning defiance upon each other, and looking grim and ghastly, in the pure, sweet atmosphere of light by which they were enveloped. The aspect of the outlaw was particularly terrible, in consequence of the wound which he had received in the mouth at the beginning of the conflict. The upper lip was divided by the stroke, the teeth shattered; and, smeared and clotted with blood, his face presented the appearance of one already stamped with all the features of the grave, and marked with an expression of hate and passion which increased its terrors. That of the partisan was stern, but unruffled — pale, but inflexible. His eyes were full of that fiery energy which, perhaps, distinguished equally the characters of the brothers. The lips were closely compressed, and resembled that sweet serenity, that resigned and noble melancholy, which peculiarly distinguishes the same feature in the instance of nearly every Indian warrior that we have ever seen. There was no faltering in his soul—he was as firm of purpose as his

enemy ; but there were other moods at work within him which the outlaw could not feel. Clarence Conway was not the person to entertain hate alone, to the exclusion of other and better feelings.

The outlaw unbuckled the sabre from his side, the sable belt, and threw them down, with the pistols which he carried, at the foot of the vault. He seemed resolute that there should be no possible obstruction to his movements in the struggle which was about to take place. Clarence Conway, on the other hand, took no such precaution. He calmly surveyed the movements of his opponent without changing muscle or positions. His eye glanced, however, with a momentary anxiety, to the clear blue vault, and the pale, pure presence looking down upon him from above, and turned involuntarily, though for a single instant only, to the distant dwelling of Flora Middleton. But this was not a moment to betray the weakness of the sentimentalist or lover. His enemy stood before him, and was ready. The outlaw had witnessed the direction of his foeman's eye, and the words of provocation gushed from him in increasing bitterness.

“ Ay, look, Clarence Conway—look ! It may be for the last time ! For that matter we may both look ; for I tell you, there shall be no child's play between us. Here, on this green turf, and under that smiling heaven, shall I be stretched in death, ere I yield up a single sentiment of that hate which makes it necessary that one of us should die for the peace and security of the other.”

“ And is it necessary, either for your peace or mine, that such should be the case ? ” demanded Clarence Conway.

“ Ay ! absolutely necessary. We can not breathe the same atmosphere. Come ! ”

Their arms were raised, their feet planted in opposition—their eyes fixed upon each other, and riveted in glassy, serpent-like watchfulness and calm.

“ Are you ready ? ” was the question of the outlaw.

“ Stay ! ” replied Clarence, while he continued to regard his enemy with a face of increased deliberation.

“ Stay !—and why should we stay ? ” retorted the other. ‘ Are you so soon quieted ! Does your stomach revolt at the

idea of a final struggle which shall end the strife between us?"

"It does!"

"Ha! Has it then come to that?" was the ironical speech of the outlaw; but Clarence interrupted him with a cool firmness of tone and look which disarmed the intended sarcasm.

You may spare your irony, Edward Morton. That I fear you not, you should know. That I am your superior in strength you have long since discovered—that I am, at least, your match with any weapon known to either of us, you can not deny; and you know that I have no dread of death."

"To what does all this tend? It means everything or nothing. Grant what you have said, still it does not follow that you shall triumph over me. You may slay me, but I can grapple with you, Clarence Conway—I can rush upon your weapon, and, sacrificing myself, succeed in killing you! Ha! is not that undeniable also?"

"Perhaps so;" was the deliberate answer. "But even this does not influence me in what I mean to say. There is a consideration of far more weight which would make me avoid this conflict."

"Ah! it is that, eh? But you shall not avoid it! I am a desperate man, Clarence Conway, and such a man always has the life of his enemy at the point of his dagger!"

"Be it so; but hear me. For all your crimes, all your hate and hostility to me—all your treachery to your country—still I shall find no pleasure in being your executioner."

"Indeed! But be not too sure. It has not yet come to that!" cried the other. "There are two to play at this game, and I flatter myself that I shall turn the tables upon you this bout. We have some light now on the subject, and these pricks which you gave me in the dark, have rather warmed me for the conflict. They rather better my chances, by rousing me to the proper feeling of strife; as, to graze the bear with a bullet, is to make him more affectionate in his squeeze. So, look to it! our embrace will be a close one. Come on quickly. We can not too soon make a finish now."

"You deceive yourself, Edward Conway—fatally deceive

yourself if you have such a fancy;" replied Clarence solemnly "If we encounter again I shall kill you. Nothing can save you. I feel it—I know it. I can not help but kill you."

"Insolent braggart! But, come on!"

"I have said nothing but the truth, and what I feel must be the result of this struggle. Hear me but an instant more, and judge. I shall find no pleasure in taking your life. I can not forget many things, and I am not desperate. However you may deride and despise the claims of blood and the opinions of society, it is impossible for me to do so. For this reason I would forego the indulgence of those passions, Edward Conway—"

"Not Conway—Morton, Cunningham!—anything but Conway!"

A smile of scorn passed over the lips of Clarence.

"I thank you for your correction," he said. "But this is a small matter. To return. My passions and enmities are scarcely less active than yours; but I would forego their enjoyment because of my greater responsibilities. I now make you an offer. Let us not fight; and you shall go free. I will facilitate your progress to Charleston—nay, insure it—and you will then be enabled, unencumbered by the villanous banditti to which you have been attached, to fly the country. I know that you have a large booty stored away in Jamaica—enough to give you competence for life. Let that suffice you. Leave the country while the chance is allowed you—while you may do so in safety. Three weeks hence, and Greene will traverse all this region!"

"Fool fancies!" exclaimed the other rudely. "Those are Rawdon's trumpets."

"You will not long hear them, except sounding the retreat. The war is well nigh over."

"Pshaw! this is mere folly. We came here to fight, I think. The sooner the better! Come on!"

"I would save you—spare you!"

"I shall not spare *you*! Your conceit is insufferable, and shall be whipped out of you, by heavens! this very night. Come on, then; I long to give or take my quittance. Your head is turned, I see, by that woman. Your Flora, my Floræ

—the Flora of Congaree—you have been lipping, have you! —and you like the taste—sweet flavor!—”

“Ruffian—wretch?” cried Clarence, with a fury that seemed as little governable now as that of the outlaw, “you are doomed. I can not spare you now.”

“I ask you not. Let the steel speak for both of us. Mine has been blushing at the time you have consumed in prating. Come on—come on! Strike as if your heart were in it, Clarence Conway, for, by God’s death, I will have it in your heart, if hell has not grown deaf to human prayer. Good blade, to your work! It is some pleasure, Clarence Conway, to know that yours is tolerably pure blood—at least it will do no dishonor to my dagger.”

The struggle followed instantaneously. The outlaw proceeded to act his declared intentions. His object seemed to be to get within the arm of his opponent—to close at all hazards, and sacrifice himself in the bloody determination to destroy his enemy.

But Clarence was no ordinary foe. His anger did not deprive him of his coolness, and his skill with the weapon was far beyond that of most men of his time. Still, it required all his watchfulness and circumspection—all his readiness of eye and arm—to baffle the purpose of the other. The blind fury of the outlaw, perhaps, served him quite as effectually as did his own resources. It made him fearless, but not fearful—full of purposes of dangers, but not dangerous—that is, comparatively speaking—for, so long as the partisan preserved his composure, and kept only on the defensive, his enemy did not find it so certainly true as he had affirmed, that a desperate man always carries the life of his enemy at the point of his dagger. He had tried this more than once, and had always been repelled sometimes with hurts, which were not always slight, though, as yet, in no case dangerous.

His constant failure warned him of the folly of his own fury, and its utter ineffectiveness to achieve the object of his desires. He recovered himself, and adopted another policy. He renewed those coarse sneers and insinuations which had been always effectual in provoking Clarence, and which had closed their

previous conference. He spoke of Flora Middleton, and in such language as was admirably calculated to throw a lover off his guard.

“You flatter yourself,” he said, “that you have just made a conquest; but have you asked its value? I tell you, Clarence Conway, if ever woman spoke falsely, Flora Middleton spoke falsely to you when she consented to be yours. I know her; nay, man, when you charged me with having been to Brier Park, you knew but half the truth. Shall I tell you that she was then as indulgent to the chief of the Black Riders as she has been since to his more moral kinsman? Here, by this old vault, did he walk with her at evening; and you know what it is, or you should know, to wander among dim groves at sunset with a romantic damsel. The heart will yield then, if ever. It softens with the hour, and melts. Ha! are you touched—touched at last? Know, then, it was my turn to lip and to taste as cordially—”

“Liar! dog! reptile!” cried Clarence, striking at him furiously as he heard these words; “Know I not that you have striven to fill her pure ears with falsehoods almost as foul as those you would now thrust into mine?”

“You have it!” cried the other, with a yell of delight, as his lunge carried the point of his dagger into the breast of the partisan; fortunately a flesh-wound only, but one in dangerous proximity to the angry heart that was now boiling in its neighborhood. The youth felt his imprudence; but if he had not, there was a counselling friend at hand, who did not suffer him to go unreminded. This was Jack Bannister, who, in the shelter of a tree contiguous, to which he had crawled unseen, had been a spectator of the brief conflict, during the short time it had lasted on the outside of the vault.

“Don’t you let him fool you, Clarence; he’s only trying to make you mad—that’s his trick. But don’t you mind him—he’s a born liar, and if you stick as you should, he’ll die with a lie in his mouth. Strike away, Clarence, as you can strike; and only forget that you ever had a father who was so foolish as to git a son of the wrong breed. Put it to him, and shut up your nater till it’s all done. God ha’ mercy ’pon me, but

“It seems so natural for me now to want to put in and kill him!”

“Ha! you have brought your bullies upon me!” were the words of Morton, as the first accents of Bannister reached his ears. “But I fear them not!”—and he renewed the assault with increased determination; if that indeed were possible.

“Keep back—meddle not, John Bannister!” cried Clarence. “I need no assistance.”

“I know it, Clarence; but, Lord love you! don’t git into a foolish passion. Go to it as ef ’twas a common work you was a-doing—splitting rails, or digging ditches, or throwing up potato-hills. Jest you hit and stick as ef you was a-managing a dug-out, or a raft, or some sich foolish cousarn. For sich a foul-mouth as he to talk agin Miss Flora! Why, it’s as foolish as a wolf to bark at the moonlight. But don’t let me interrupt you. Go to it! I’m jest a-looking on to see the eend, and obsarve fair play; only make haste, Clarence; shut him up as soon as you can, for the bugle’s a sounding from the head of the avenue, and there’s little time to lose.”

The warning was not to be disregarded, and Clarence Conway soon brought the strife to an issue. The resumption of his caution provoked the outlaw into a renewal of his rashness, and his dagger-hand was caught in the grasp of the partisan at the same moment when the weapon of the other sunk into his breast. Clarence relaxed his hold upon his victim the instant that the blow was delivered. He fancied that he had given him the *coup de grace* as he intended; and a strange, keen, sudden pang rushed like lightning through his own bosom.

The outlaw, meanwhile, felt himself about to fall. A faintness covered his frame; his sight was growing dark; and, with the last convulsive moment of reflection, he threw himself forward upon the breast of his enemy, whose dagger-point was now turned toward the ground. His left arm was tightly clasped about the form of Clarence; while his right, with all the remaining consciousness of his mind, and the concentrated, but fast failing vigor of his frame, addressed a blow at the heart of the latter, which it needed sufficient strength only to render fatal.

But the arm of the outlaw sank down in the effort ere the

dagger reached its mark. His hold upon his enemy was instantly relaxed, and he fell fainting at the feet of Clarence, ere the latter had sufficiently recovered from the horror which he felt, to be altogether conscious of the danger from which he had escaped. With every justification for the deed which necessity could bring, he yet felt how full of pain and sorrow, if not of crime, was the shedding of a brother's blood.

CHAPTER XX.

CAPRICES OF FORTUNE.

WE have omitted, in the proper place, to record certain events that happened, during the progress of the conflict, in order that nothing should retard the narrative of that event. But, ere it had reached its termination, and while its results were in some measure doubtful, a new party came upon the scene, who deserves our attention, and commanded that of the faithful woodman. A cry—a soft but piercing cry—unheard by either of the combatants, first drew the eyes of the former to the neighboring wood from which it issued; and, simultaneously, a slender form darted out of the cover, and hurried forward in the direction of the strife. Bannister immediately put himself in readiness to prevent any interference between the parties; and, when he saw the stranger pushing forward, and wielding a glittering weapon in his grasp, as he advanced, he rushed from his own concealment, and threw himself directly in the pathway of the intruder. The stranger recoiled for an instant, while Bannister commanded him to stand.

“Back!” said the latter, “back, my lad, till it’s all over. It won’t be long now, I warrant you. They’ll soon finish it; but until they’ve done——”

He drew a pistol from his belt, which he cocked, presented, and thus closed the sentence. The stranger shrunk back at this sudden and sturdy interruption; but, recovering a moment

after, appeared determined to press forward. The second warning of the scout was more imperative than the first

“Stand back, I tell you!” cried the resolute woodman, “or by blazes, I’ll send daylight and moonlight both through you with an ounce bullet. I ain’t trifling with you, stranger; be sartin, I’m serious enough when I take pistol in hand. Back, I tell you, till the tug’s over, and then you may see and be seen. Move another step and I’ll flatten you.”

“No, no, no!” was the incoherent response; “let me pass! I *will* pass!”

The sounds which assured the woodman of the determination of the stranger, were so faintly and breathlessly articulated, that, at any other time, Jack Bannister would have only laughed at the obstinate purpose which they declared; but the moment was too precious for his friend, and he was too earnest in securing fair play for all parties, not to regard their tenor rather than their tone.

“If you do, I’ll shoot you, as sure as a gun!” was his answer.

“They will kill him!” murmured the stranger, in accents of utter despondency. He struck his head with his palm in a manner of the deepest wo; then, as if seized with a new impulse, waved a dagger in the air, and darted upon the woodman.

So sudden was the movement and unexpected, that Bannister never thought to shoot, but, clubbing his pistol, he dealt the assailant a blow upon the skull, which laid him prostrate. A faint cry escaped the lips of the youth in falling; and Bannister fancied that his own name formed a part of its burden. He was also surprised when he recollected that the enemy, though rushing on him with a dagger, had yet forborne to use it, although sufficient opportunity had been allowed him to do so, had such been his purpose, in the surprise occasioned by his first onslaught. But the moment was not one favorable to reflection. Clarence had now overcome his enemy, who was prostrate and insensible; and, faint himself, was bending over him in a fruitless effort to stanch the blood which issued from a deep wound on the side. Banuister approached him with the inquiry—

“God be thanked, Clarence, that you are uppermost. How is it with him? Is he dead?”

"I hope not. He breathes still. There is motion in his heart."

"I'm sorry for it, Clarence. I ain't sorry that you ha'n't killed him, for I'd rather you shouldn't do it; but I'm mighty sorry he s not dead. It'll be all the better for him if he is. 'Twould save a neck smooth to the last. But come, there's a great stir at the house. I can hear the voices."

"But we can not leave him here, Jack. Something must be done for him. Would to God I had never seen him, for I feel most wretched, now that it's all over."

"'Tain't a time to feel such feelings. You couldn't help it, Clarence. He would force it upon you. Didn't I hear him myself? But it's no use talking here. We must brush up and be doing. I've given a knock to a chap here, that's laid him out as quiet as you laid the other. A small chap he was. I might have stopped him, I'm thinking, with a lighter hand; but I hadn't time to think, he jumped so spry upon me."

"Who is he?" demanded Clarence.

"I don't know; a friend to Edward Conway, looking after him, I reckon. I'll see all about him directly, when once you're off. But you must trot at once. There's a mighty stir all about the house, and I'm thinking, more than once, that I've hearn a whoo-whoop-haloo, below thar in the direction of the flats. 'Twas a mighty suspicious sort of whoop for an owl to make, and I'm jub'ous 'twa'n't one that had a good schoolmaster. 'Twa'n't altogether nateral."

"What are we to do with him?" demanded Clarence, as he gazed with an aspect of complete bewilderment, now at the body of his kinsman, and now at the distant mansion.

"Do! I take it, it's jest the reasonable time to hearken to the words of scripiter: 'Let the dead bury their dead;' and though I can't exactly see how they're to set about it, yet, when people's hard pushed as we are, it's very well to put upon holy book all such difficult matters as we can't lay straight by our own hands. I'm thinking, we'd best lay him quietly in the vault and leave him."

"But he's not dead, Bannister, and with care might recover."

"More's the pity. It's better for you and me, and himself

too, if he don't recover; and it seems to me very onmaternal that you should take pains first to put him to death, and the next moment worry yourself to bring him to life again."

"I took no such pains, Bannister. I would not have struck him if I could have avoided the necessity, and I strove to avoid making his wounds fatal."

"I'm sorry for that agin. But this ain't no time for palaverin'g. You'll soon have these dragoons of Coffin scouring the grounds of the barony, and Rawdon's too good a soldier not to have his scouts out for three good miles round it. Them trumpets that we hear are talking some such language now; and we must ride pretty soon, or we'll be in a swamp, the waters rising, the dug-out gone, and a mighty thick harricane growing in the west."

"I can not think of leaving the body thus, Bannister."

"And you resk your own body and soul—or your own body, which is pretty much the soul of the 'Congaree Blues'—ef you stop to take care of him," replied the woodman.

"What are we to do?"

"Clarence, trust to me. Take your horse—you'll find him in that hollow—and get to the head of the troop before Coffin's hoofs tread upon its tail. I'll be mighty soon after you; but before I start, I'll give 'em a blast of my horn, and a scare from my puppy-dog here"—meaning his pistol—"which 'll be pretty sure to bring a dozen of 'em on my track. When they come here, they'll find the body of Edward Conway, and this lad that I flattened; and they can do for 'em all that's needful. I'm a hoping that this here person," pointing to the chief of the Black Riders, "is out of his misery for ever, and won't trouble the surgeon with much feeling of his hurts. As for the other lad, I don't think I could ha' hurt him much with the butt only, though I struck him mighty quick, and without axing how much or how little he could stand. Trust to me, Clarence, and go ahead."

Obviously, this was the only course to be pursued in order to reconcile the duties and desires which the partisan entertained. He took not a single further look at his enemy, whose grim and ghastly features, turned upward in the moonlight, presented an

aspect far more fearful than any which the simple appearance of death could present; and, with a few words of parting direction to the woodman, he hurried away to the hollow where his horse had been concealed. In a few moments after, the sturdy Bannister rejoiced, as his ear caught the slow movement of his departing hoofs.

The bold fellow then—before putting his design in execution, of alarming the British at the mansion and bringing them down upon the spot—true to the business of the scout, stole forward in the direction of the dwelling, in order to ascertain what he could, as to the disposition and strength of the force which had come and was still advancing. A perfect knowledge of the place, its points of retreat and places of shelter, enabled him to reach a station where he saw quite as much as he desired. The cavalry, a small body of men, were evidently drawn up as a guard along the avenue, for the reception of the commander-in-chief; and while Bannister admired their array, and noted the stealthy caution which marked their movements, he was also enable to count their numbers with tolerable certainty.

“More than they told me,” he muttered to himself; “but a good ambushment will make up the difference, by thinning them a little.”

Having satisfied his curiosity, and perceiving that the main body of the British army was at hand, he contented himself with observing, with soldierly admiration, the fine appearance of the troops—a body consisting chiefly of the Irish regiments, then newly arrived from Europe—and the excellent order of their march; and then stole away, as quietly as he approached, to the place where he had left the wounded.

Returning with as stealthy a movement as at his departure, he was surprised to discover that the body of the stranger whom he had knocked down was no longer where he had left it. A considerable curiosity filled his bosom to discover who this person was. His conduct had been somewhat singular; and Bannister was almost sure, that when he inflicted the blow which had laid him prostrate, the stranger had uttered his own name in falling; and that, too, in tones which were neither strange nor those of an enemy. His first impression was that this per-

son had feigned unconsciousness, but had taken advantage of his momentary absence to steal off into the contiguous woods. To seek him there under present circumstances, and with so little time as was allowed him, would be an idle attempt; and the woodman, with some disappointment, turned once more to the spot where the outlaw was lying.

To his surprise, he found a second person with him, whom a nearer glance discovered to be the very person whose absence he had regretted. The stranger was lying upon the body of Edward Morton, and seemingly as lifeless as himself: but he started up when he heard the footsteps of Bannister, and made a feeble attempt to rise from the ground, but fell forward with an expression of pain, and once more lay quiescent upon the body of the outlaw.

The scout drew nigh and addressed the youth with an accent of excessive kindness; for the milk of a gentle as well as a generous nature, flowing in his heart from the beginning, had not been altogether turned by the cruel necessities of the warfare in which he was engaged. But, though he spoke the kindest words of consolation and encouragement known to his vocabulary, and in the kindest tones, he received no answer. The youth lay in a condition of equal stillness with him whose body he seemed resolved to cover with his own.

Bannister readily conceived that he had swooned. He advanced accordingly, stooped down, and turned the face to the moonlight. It was a fair face and very pale, except where two livid streaks were drawn by the now clotted blood, which had escaped from beneath the black fur cap which he wore. This, upon examination, the scout found to be cut by the pistol-blow which he had given; and it was with a shivering sensation of horror, to him very unusual, that, when he pressed lightly with his finger upon the skull below, it felt soft and pulpy.

“Lord forgive me!” was the involuntary ejaculation of the woodman—“Lord forgive me, if I have hit the poor lad too hard a blow.”

His annoyance increased as he beheld the slight and slender person of the youth.

“There was no necessity to use the pistol, poor fellow. A fist

blow would have been enough to have kept him quiet"—and, muttering thus at intervals, he proceeded to untie the strings which secured the cap to the head of the stranger. These were fastened below the chin; and, in his anxiety and haste, the woodman, whose fingers may readily be supposed to have been better fitted for any less delicate business, contrived to run the slip into a knot, which his hunting knife was finally employed to separate.

The cap was removed; and in pressing the hair back from the wound, he was surprised at its smooth, silk-like fineness and unusual length. This occasioned his increased surprise; and when, looking more closely, he saw in the fair light of the moon, the high narrow white forehead in connection with the other features of the face, a keen and painful conjecture passed through his mind, and with tremulous haste and a convulsive feeling of apprehension, he tore open the jacket of dismal sable which the unconscious person wore, and the whole mournful truth flashed upon his soul.

“God ha’ mercy, it is a woman!—it is she—it is poor Mary. Mary—Mary Clarkson! Open your eyes, Mary, and look up. Don’t be scared—it’s a friend—it’s me, Jack Bannister! Your old friend, your father’s friend. God ha’ mercy! She don’t see, she don’t hear—she can’t speak. If I should ha’ hit too hard! if I should ha’ hit too hard.”

The anxiety of the honest fellow as he addressed the unconscious victim of his own unmeditated blow would be indescribable. He sat down on the sward and took her head into his lap, and clasped her brows, and laid his ear to her heart to feel its beatings, and when, with returning consciousness, she murmured a few incoherent words, his delight was that of one frantic.

He now laid her down tenderly, and ran off to a little spring which trickled from the foot of the hill, with the position of which he was well acquainted. A gourd hung upon the slender bough of a tree that spread above the basin. This he hastily scooped full of water, and ran back to the unfortunate girl. She had somewhat recovered during his absence—sufficiently to know that some one was busy in the work of restoration and kindness.

“No, no,” she muttered, “mind not me—go to him—him! Save him before they kill him.”

“Him, indeed! No! Let him wait. He can afford to do it, for I reckon it’s all over with him. But you, Mary, dear Mary: tell me, Mary, that you are not much hurt—tell me that you know me; it was I who hurt you; I—your old friend, John Bannister, Mary; but it’s a God’s truth, I didn’t know you then. I’d ha’ cut off my right arm first, Mary, before it should ever have given pain to you.”

“Leave me, if you have mercy—I don’t want your help; you can’t help me—no! no! Go to him. He will bleed to death while you are talking.”

“Don’t tell me to leave you, Mary; and don’t trouble yourself about him. He’ll have all the help he needs—all he deserves; but you! look up, dear Mary, and tell me if you know me. I am still your friend, Mary—your father’s friend.”

The mention of her father seemed to increase her sufferings.

“No! no!—not that!”—she muttered bitterly; and writhing about with an effort that seemed to exhaust all her remaining strength, she turned her face upon the ground, where she lay insensible.

Never was mortal more miserable or more bewildered than our worthy scout. He now suffered from all the feelings, the doubt and indecision, which had beset his commander but a little while before. To remain was to risk being made a prisoner; yet to leave the poor victim of his own random blow, in her present condition, was as painful to his own sense of humanity as it was unendurable by that tender feeling which, as we have already intimated, possessed his heart in an earlier day for the frail victim of another’s perfidy. This feeling her subsequent dishonor had not wholly obliterated; and he now gazed with a sort of stupid sorrow upon the motionless form before him, until his big, slow gathering tears fell thick upon her neck, which his arm partially sustained; while his fingers turned over the long silken hair, portions of which were matted with her blood, in a manner which betrayed something of a mental self-abandonment—a total forgetfulness of duty and prudence—on the part of one of the hardiest scouts in the whole Congaree country.

How long he might have lingered in this purposeless manner, had not an interruption, from without, awakened him to a more resolute, if a less humane course, may not be conjectured. In that moment the resources of the strong man were sensibly diminished. The hopes and loves of his early youth were busy at his heart. Memory was going over her tears and treasures, and wounds which had been scarred by time and trial were all suddenly reopened.

In this musing vein he half forgot the near neighborhood of his enemies, and the dangers which awaited him in the event of captivity. These were dangers, be it remembered, of no common kind. It was not then the mere prospect of restraint which threatened the rebel if taken prisoner. The sanguinary rage of party had to be pacified with blood; and it is strongly probable that the merciless executions of which the British commanders were so frequently guilty in the south, were sometimes prompted by a desire to conciliate the loyalists, of the same region, who had personal enmities to gratify, and personal revenges to wreak, which could be satisfied in scarcely any other way.

Of these dangers the sturdy woodman was made most unexpectedly conscious by hearing the tones and language of military command immediately behind him. A guard was evidently approaching, sentinels were about to be placed, and the sounds which startled him on one side were echoed and strangely answered by a sudden clamor of a most unmilitary character which rose, at nearly the same instant, from the swamps and flats which lay along the river a few hundred yards below.

Mary Clarkson could have explained the mystery of the latter noises, were she conscious enough to hear; but such was not the case. Her consciousness was momentary; and when obvious, betrayed itself in expressions which now denoted a wandering intellect.

A stern agony filled the heart of the scout as he rose to his feet, lifted her tenderly in his arms, and bore her toward the tomb, before the entrance of which he laid her gently down, in a spot which he knew would make her conspicuous to the eyes of the first person approaching. He had barely disengaged her from his arms, and was still bending over her with a last look.

the expression of which, though unseen by any, spoke more effectually the anguish which he felt, than could ever have been conveyed by the rude and simple language of his lips, when he felt a hand upon his shoulder—a quick, firm grasp—followed by the sounds of a voice, which it soon appeared that he knew.

“Oh! ho! Caught at last, Supple Jack; Supple, the famous! Your limbs will scarcely help you now. You are my prisoner.”

“Not so fast, Watson Gray—I know you!” replied the scout, as he started to his feet and made an effort to turn; but his enemy had grappled him from behind, had pinioned his arms by a grasp from limbs as full of muscle as his own, and was, in fact, fairly mounted upon his back.

“And *feel* me too, Jack Bannister, I think. There’s no getting loose, my boy, and your only way is to keep quiet. There are twenty Hessians at my back to help me, and as many Irish.”

“More than enough, Watson Gray, for a poor Congaree boatman. But you’re rether vent’rous, I’m thinking, to begin the attack. You ought to ha’ waited for a little more help, Watson Gray. You’re rather a small build of a man, if my memory sarves me rightly—you ha’n’t half of my heft, and can’t surely think to manage me.”

“I do, indeed!” was the answer. “If I’m light, you’ll find me strong—strong enough to keep your arms fast till my wild Irish come up, and lay you backward.”

“Well, that may be, Watson. But my arms ain’t my legs, my lad. Keep *them*, if you can.”

Thus speaking, greatly to the surprise of the assailant, he grasped the enclaspings arms of the latter with his muscular fingers, held them with a hold as unyielding as their own, and rising erect, set off, at a smart canter down the hill in the direction of the river. This proceeding was one which had formed no part of Watson Gray’s calculations; and he became suddenly and awkwardly aware that there was an unpleasant change in the relations of the parties.

“The boot’s on t’other leg, I’m thinking, Watson Gray,” ehuckled our scout of Congaree. To this offensive suggestion the other had no answer, in words; but he employed all his

breath and effort with the view to extricating himself from the biped whose shoulders he had so indiscreetly mounted. But the performance and the desire, are notoriously very different things. In spite of all his struggles, Jack Bannister kept on his way down hill, and Watson Gray, perforce, kept in his uneasy place of elevation. He had not calculated *all* the resources of his great antagonist, and now cursed himself for his overweening confidence in his own.

"It's but nateral that you should kick and worry, at riding a nag that you ha'n't bitted, Watson Gray, but it's of no use; you're fairly mounted, and there's no getting off in a hurry," was the consoling language of the scout as he ran toward the wood with his captive. "I see that you never hearn of the danger of shaking hands with a black bear. The danger is that you can't let go when you want to. A black bear is so civil an animal, that he never likes to give up a good acquaintance, and he'll hold on, paw for paw with you, and rubbing noses when he can, though it's the roughest tree in the swamp that stands up between him and his friend. Your arms and shoulders, I reckon, are jist as good and strong as mine. But your body ain't got the weight, and I could carry you all day, on a pinch, and never feel the worse for it. You see how easy we go together!"

"D—n you, for a cunning devil," cried the embarrassed Gray, kicking and floundering curiously, but vainly striving to get loose.

"Don't you curse, Watson Gray;—it sort o' makes you feel heavier on my quarters."

"Let me down, Bannister, and you may go free, and to the devil where you came from."

"Well, you're too good. You'll let me go free?—I'm thinking that it's you that's my prisoner, my boy. I'll parole you as soon as I reach my critter."

"I'll shout to the Hessians to shoot you as you run," vociferated the other.

"Will you, then. You don't consider that your back will first feel the bullets. You're a cunning man, Watson Gray. I've always said you were about the best scout I know'd in the

whole Congaree country, and it's a long time since we've been dodging after one another. I was a little juh'ous, I confess, that you were a better man than myself. I was: but you made a poor fist of this business—a poor pair of fists, I may say," concluded the woodman with a chuckle.

"So I did—a d—d poor business of it!" groaned the other. "I should have put my knife into your ribs, or had the scouts round you first."

"The knife's a bad business, Watson," was the reply of the other;—"a good scout, that's not onnatural, never uses it when less hurtful things will answer. But it's true you should ha' put your Hessians between me and the woods before you cried out 'you're my prisoner!' If ever a man jumps into determination at all, it's jist when he hears some such ugly words, on a sudden, in his ears; and when I felt you, riding so snugly on my back, I know'd I had you, and could ha' sworn it."

A desperate effort to effect his release, which Watson Gray made at this time, put a stop to the complacent speech of the other, and made him less indulgent.

"I'll cure your kicking, my lad," said he, as, backing himself against a pine-tree, he subjected his involuntary burden to a succession of the hardest thumps which he could inflict upon him, by driving his body with all its force against the incorrigible and knotty giant of the forests. The gasping of the captive, which ensued, sufficiently attested the success of this measure; and an attempt which Gray made, a moment or two after, to get the ear of Supple Jack within his teeth—which was answered by a butt that almost ruined his whole jaw—terminated the fruitless endeavors of the former to free himself from his awkward predicament.

Meanwhile, the stir and confusion were increasing behind the fugitives, and it was a wonder to both that they had not been pursued. The sounds, imperfectly heard by the woodman, seemed to be those of actual conflict; but he felt himself secure, and his thoughts reverted, over all, to the poor Mary Clarkson—the victim of the outlaw with whom she had been left, and, perhaps, his own victim. The poor fellow regarded himself with horror when he thought of the cruel blow his hand had inflicted,

But he had no time for these reflections; and the necessity of joining his commander, nerved him to new vigor in his progress. He had now reached the place where his horse was concealed. His first movement was to pitch his captive over his head; which he did very unexpectedly to the latter. In the next moment, his knee was upon his breast, and with pistol presented to his mouth, he made Watson Gray surrender his weapons. These consisted only of two hunting knives, and an ordinary pocket pistol. He then rifled his pockets of all which they contained, kept his papers, but generously restored his money.

“Now, Watson Gray, you’re a Congaree man, like myself; and ef I’ve thumped you a little hard as we run, put it down to the needcessity of the case and not because I wanted to hurt you. I’ll let you off now, on your parole, that you may go back and help Ned Conway. You’ve been his helper and adviser a mighty long time, and you’ve done for him a precious deal of ugly business. He’ll need more help now, I’m thinking, than you can give him. There’s a poor boy there—too—a young slender chap, that I hit with a’most too heavy a hand, I’m afeard, and if you can do anything for her——”

“Her!” said the other.

“Oh, yes—the truth-will out—she’s a gal though in no gal’s clothes. Perhaps you know her. You ought to—you know enough of Ned Conway’s wickedness to know that. Take care of that gal, Watson Gray, and if physie can do her good, see that she gets it. I ax it of you as a favor. You’re a stout fellow, Watson, and I’ve long tried to have a turn with you. I’m thinking you’re a better scout than I am; but there’s no discredit to you to say that you want my heft and timbers. In a close tug I’m your master; but I’m jub’ous you’d work through a swamp better than me. See to that gal, Watson, for the sake of that Congaree country. She’s one of our own children, I may say, seeing we’re both from the river;—and if there’s any cost that you’re at, in helping her, either for food or physie, let me know of it, and you shall have it paid back to you, ef I dig the gold out of some inemy’s heart. Good by, now, Watson, and remember you must never take a bear by the paws till you’ve first made tarms with him about letting go.”

CHAPTER XXI.

PROGRESS AND SUSPENSE.

"WAS ever poor devil caught so completely in his own trap before!" was the querulous exclamation of Watson Gray, as, with a painful effort, he rose from the ground where his adversary had so ungently stretched him out. "Egad, I'm sore all over; though I think there's no bone broken!" He rubbed his arms and thighs while he spoke, with an anxious earnestness which showed that he spoke in all sincerity, though still with some doubt whether his limbs preserved their integrity.

"Confound the scamp! I thought I had him sure. His arms fastened, his back turned!—who'd have thought of such a canter down hill with a strong man over his shoulders! Well, he certainly deserves the name of Supple Jack! He's earned it fairly by this bont, if he never did before. If ever fellow was strong and supple over all the men I ever knew, he's the man. But for those sleepy Hessians, I'd have had him; and I wonder what can keep them now. The dull, drowsy, beef-eyed Dutchmen—what the d—l are they after? What stir's that?"

A buzz of many voices in earnest controversy, in the direction of the vault, arrested the speaker in his soliloquy, and stimulated his apprehensions.

"By Jupiter! they're fighting among themselves! What an uproar! They're are loggerheads, surely—the Hessian boobies!"

The anxiety of the scout made him half forgetful of his bruises as he turned toward the spot from whence the clamor rose. There seemed sufficient cause to justify the apprehensions which he had expressed. The uproar which first startled him was followed by oaths, execrations, and finally the clash of arms. He hurried forward to the scene of the uproar, and arrived not a moment too soon to prevent bloodshed. It will be necessary

that we should retrace our steps for a while in order to ascertain the causes of the present commotion.

It will be remembered that Mary Clarkson left the bivouac of the Black Riders at the very time when, going through the bloody ceremonial of pledging themselves to one another for the performance of a new crime, they led her to suppose that they would very shortly follow upon her footsteps. This, to a certain extent, was, indeed, the fact. They followed her, but not so soon as she expected; and she reached the miserable man for whom she had sacrificed the life of woman's life, in full time to have forewarned him of their approach and purpose, had this, under the circumstances, been either necessary or possible. We have already seen what those circumstances were; and the cruel insults which followed her unselfish devotion to a creature so little deserving the care of any heart. The chief of the outlaws had already fallen beneath the arm of his kinsman.

The Black Riders had still some arrangements to make—some stimulating liquors to quaff, and purposes to fulfil scarcely less stimulating—before they started for the work of treachery and murder. One of these arrangements was the elevation of Stockton to the chief command, as if Morton were already dead. Ensign Darcy, by a natural transition, and as a becoming reward for his good service, was promoted at the same time to the station which the other had so lately filled.

Morton had his friends among the banditti, who simply submitted to proceedings which they could not baffle, and openly dared not resist. They, however, held themselves in reserve, with a mental determination to defeat, if possible, the dark purposes of their companions before they could possibly carry them out to completion. But this determination was ineffective for the time, simply because it was individual in each man's bosom. They had had no opportunity allowed them for deliberation, and, being half suspected of lukewarmness, they were not suffered to get together unwatched and unobserved by the dominant faction.

Elated with his success, the arrogant Stockton fancied that the path of the future was fairly open before his steps, unembarrassed by all obstructions, and the smiles of good fortune beck-

oning him to the conquest. There was but one task before him necessary to render all things easy, and that a malignant sentiment of hate goaded him on to perform. The murder of Edward Morton—his personal enemy—the man who knew his secret baseness, and who scorned him in consequence—was yet to be executed; and this—when he thought of the past, its bitterness and contumely—of the future, its doubts and dangers—became a task of grateful personal performance. To this task, when all the ceremonials were over, of his own and confederate's elevation, he accordingly hurried.

His men were soon put in readiness, and Darcy, who had traversed the ground more than once before, took charge of the advance. Their plans were simple, but sufficient, had the circumstances continued throughout as they were at the beginning. They had meditated to advance upon, and to surround the mansion, in which they supposed their captain to be; then, raising the cry of "Sumter," create an alarm, in the confusion of which Morton was to be put to death.

It need not be said that the unexpected approach of a British army, under a forced march, and without any of the usual bruit attending on the progress of a large body of men, utterly baffled all their calculations; and when, following the path toward the tomb, which Morton had originally taken, Lieutenant Darcy arrived at the spot, he found it almost in complete possession of soldiery, consisting of the very Hessians—some twenty in number—on the assistance of whom Watson Gray had so confidently calculated when he made the rash attempt on the person of Jack Bannister.

The Hessian troops had never before been seen by the Black Riders, and Darcy immediately jumped to the conclusion that these were partisan troops of Lee's legion, which he knew had, a little time before, been seen in the neighborhood; and the conjecture was a natural one, not only that they might be there still, but that Morton might already have become their captive. The incautious movement of these soldiers suggested to Darcy, who was not without his ambition, the project of capturing the whole of them. They were evidently as careless of danger, as if they had never known what apprehension was; and finding

them squatting around some object near the tomb, busy in low discussion, the next most natural conjecture, to one of his marauding habits, was, that they had already rifled the mansion, and were now sharing its plunder.

The cupidity of the habitual robber rendered his judgment easy of access to any suggestion which favored the mercenary passions of his heart; and, taking that for granted which was merely possible, and waiting for no further knowledge of the truth, Darcy stole back to Stockton, who was following with the main body, and readily filled his mind with the ideas which predominated in his own. But few questions were asked by the new captain. The information of Darcy seemed to cover all the ground; and they both were instantly ripe for action.

“There are not twenty—squat upon the turf—some of their arms lie beside them, and some upon the tomb; and the plunder, if one may judge from the interest they take in it, must be rather more than has blessed their eyes for many a day. We can surround them in a jiffy, without striking a blow.”

“But Morton!—do you see nothing of him?” demanded Stockton anxiously.

“No! But if these fellows found him at the house, they’ve saved us some trouble. They’ve done for him already.”

“Enough!—set on, and lead the way. Manage it, Darcy, to suit yourself; you alone know the path.”

“Hark! a trumpet! I have heard that trumpet once before. It must be at the mansion.”

“The more need for hurry. These fellows are a squad of Lee’s or Sumter’s, who have rifled the house before the main body came up. We must be in time to relieve them of their burden before they get help from the strongest. After that, we can push up for the house, and see what is to be done with the rest.”

“Keep all still, then,” said Darcy. “I’ll undertake to surround these rascals; and relieve them of their plunder, without emptying a pistol. Let your horses be fastened here, and we’ll go on foot the rest of the journey. Dismount—dismount; we have but a few hundred yards to go.”

Such were the arrangements of the Black Riders; and yield-

ing the management of the affair entirely to Darcy, Stockton followed with his band in silence. With the stealthy progress of the Indian, each individual passed to his appointed station, until the tomb, and all about it, was completely environed with a *cordon militaire*, from which nothing could escape. A signal whistle warned them to be in readiness, and a second commanded the movement.

The operation was fully successful. The Hessians were surrounded before sword could be drawn or yager lifted. Nothing could well exceed the astonishment of the mutual parties, the captors equally with the captive. The Hessians, with an army of two thousand men or more at hand, were confounded to find themselves, on a sudden, in custody of a force not twice their own number; while the amazement of the Black Riders was scarcely less, when they heard the clamors of the people they had made captive, in a language which they could not comprehend, and the harsh sounds of which seemed to them so shocking and unnatural. Their disappointment was something increased, also, to discover, that instead of the treasure of the house of Middleton—the family plate and ladies' jewels—the supposed plunder around which the Hessians had been squatting was neither more nor less than the body, seemingly dead, of the tender boy who usually attended upon their captain.

It was at this moment of confusion on both hands, and before anything could be understood or anything explained, that Watson Gray made his appearance, to the satisfaction of one at least of the parties.

"How now, Darcy? what's the matter here? What are you doing with these men? Let them go."

"Let them go, indeed! when we've just taken them. Let them rather go to the gallows."

"Gallows! why, who do you take these fellows for?"

"Lee's legion—or a part of it."

"Indeed? Had your courage ever carried you nigh enough to Lee's legion, you'd have found out your mistake. Why, man, what are you thinking of? These are his majesty's new levies, hired or bought from the prince of Hesse Cassel, at two and sixpence a-head, and d—d extravagant pay

too, for such heads as they've got. Let them go—they're Hessians!"

A gibberish, utterly beyond translation by any present, arose in echo from the captured foreigners, in full confirmation of this assurance. By this time Stockton made his appearance, and the face of Watson Gray might have been seen to indicate some surprise when he saw him. Gray knew the relation in which Stockton stood to his captain, and was instantly assured that the latter had never deputed to him the chief command in his absence. The circumstance looked suspicious; but Gray was too old a scout to suffer his suspicions to be seen, until he knew in what condition the game stood.

"Ah, Stockton!" he said, indifferently—"is that you? but where's Ben Williams? is he not in command?"

"No, I am," said Stockton—"I am for the present. We came to look after the captain."

"The captain?—why, where did he leave you?"

"In the swamp flats, some two miles below."

"And what brings you to look after him? Did he order it?"

"No," said Darcy, taking up the tale with an adroitness of which he knew that Stockton was no master—"no; but we heard trumpets, and as he stayed rather long, we were apprehensive about him. When we came, and saw these fellows here, with strange uniforms, we took 'em for Lee's legion, as we heard that Lee was dodging about this neighborhood."

"And you really have never seen Lee's uniforms, ensign?"

"No, never: we've been operating above, you know; and—"

"You have not found the captain, then?"

"Not yet, and what to do——"

"I'll tell you: look there and you'll find him. The sooner we attend to him the better."

He led the way to the body of Edward Morton as he spoke, stooped down with composure, but interest, and proceeded to examine it for the signs of life which it contained. The wily Darcy followed his example, and his conduct, in turn, suggested to Stockton that which it would be proper for him to pursue. Much time was not given to the examination, and still less in vain regrets and lamentations. The selfishness of man's

nature soars triumphant above all other considerations, in a time of war; and life becomes as small a subject of consideration as any one of its own circumstances.

"Some ugly hurts here, I reckon," said Darcy; "we must get him to the house and to the hands of the surgeon, as soon as possible."

"Does he live?" asked Stockton in a whisper, over Darcy's shoulder.

"Ay, he lives!" was the answer made by Gray, in tones which were somewhat sharpened by asperity; "there's life enough to go upon, and, with good care, he'll be able shortly to be in the saddle. If we can stop the blood, there's nothing to be afraid of, I'm thinking."

This man boldly took the lead, as a man having his wits about him will be always apt to do, in seasons of sudden peril and great surprise. Even Stockton tacitly submitted to his guidance.

"Give way there, my good fellows, and let's see what we're about. Here, one of you take that door, there—the door of the vault—from its hinges, and we'll carry him to the house on that."

Watson Gray muttered through his closed teeth at the conclusion; and his hands were unconsciously pressed upon his hips as he spoke: "He'll have an easier ride than I had of it. My bones will talk of Jack Bannister for a month."

The door of the vault was soon brought forward, and the Black Riders, with careful hands, raised their captain upon it. Darcy and Stockton both busied themselves in this service. But, though performed with great caution, the motion recalled the wounded man to consciousness and pain, and two or three half-stifled moans escaped from his lips. He muttered a few words, also, which showed that he still fancied himself engaged in all the struggles of a protracted and doubtful strife.

When Gray had seen him fairly placed upon the frame, which was amply large, he thought of the poor girl whom the earnest solicitations of Supple Jack had commended to his care; and, with a degree of interest and tenderness which could scarcely have been expected from one habitually so rough, he himself

assisted to place the slight form of the victim beside the body of her betrayer.

By this time, however, the friendly stupor which had first come to her relief, no longer possessed her faculties. She had recovered her consciousness, but under the burning pressure of fever, which filled her mind with all the fancies of delirium. She raved of a thousand things, incoherently, which perhaps none present could in any way comprehend, but the one individual who was engaged in conducting the operations. He, too, harsh as was his nature, callous and insensible—the creature of the cruel man whose profligate passions he served, and who had reduced her to the thing she was,—he, too, did not appear entirely unaffected by the wild agony which her ravings denoted and expressed. He walked beside her, as a dozen of the soldiers carried the litter toward the house; and few were the words, and those only such as seemed to be necessary, which he uttered during the mournful procession.

“You had better set your men in handsome order, Stockton. You will meet Lord Rawdon at the house, with all his suite, and a fine show of military. He likes to see handsome dressing and a good front, and he’ll look to you for it while the captain’s sick.”

“A cursed chance, this,” muttered Stockton, as he drew aside with Darcy to put in execution the suggestions of the scout. “Who’d have thought it? Rawdon here, and we know not a word about it!”

“It’s devilish fortunate we did not rush on in the dark. That peep of mine was well thought on. But it makes very little difference, except the loss of the plunder. Morton’s pretty well done for. No less than five wounds upon him—two in the jaw and three in the body.”

“But how came it? who could have done it?” said Stockton.

“That matters less than all. Some friend, I take it, who knew what we wished most, and saved us the trouble of the performance.”

“But how strange! and how stranger than all that we should have been deceived in that boy—that Henry!”

“Ay!—but let us hurry on, and show alacrity as well as

order. Of course we'll say nothing about the captaincy. You're still lieutenant only, and if Morton dies——"

"He must die!" said the other.

"Ay, he must. Rawdon will leave him a surgeon, and we will find a guard; and if he survives the one, there's but little chance of his getting off from the other. Eh! what think you?"

"It will do," was the significant answer of Stockton. They understood each other thoroughly, before they put their men in order. The thoughts of Watson Gray were not less busy, as he pursued his way alone with the wounded persons; nor were they more favorable to the conspirators, than was the determination of those friendly to their captain. He knew, better than any other man, the true history of the latter, and the sort of relation in which he stood to his troop. He was not ignorant, also, of the scorn which Morton felt for Stockton, and the hate, more deadly because secret, with which the other requited it. He could readily conceive, at the same time, that Stockton's interest would lie in the death of his captain; and, putting all these things together in his mind, he determined to keep his eyes open, and watchful of every movement of the parties.

"Rawdon will take them with him to Ninety-Six," he muttered, as he came to this conclusion.

"I will persuade him to do so, at least, and the chances are fair that they will get themselves knocked on the head before the siege is over. But, whether they do or not, we shall gain time; and if Morton's hurts are curable, we shall know it before they get back, and provide accordingly. But one thing must be cared for. Rawdon must not know Morton in the house of Flora Middleton. That would spoil all. I must speak with him before the body arrives. He must leave the matter to me."

Whatever may have been the tie that attached Watson Gray to the chief of the Black Riders, his course was evidently that of a true and shrewdly thinking friend. He had no sooner determined what was proper for him to do, than he hurried ahead of the procession, and made his appearance in the spacious hall of the mansion several minutes before it could possibly arrive. His lordship was in the parlor with the ladies, but Gray knew him

to be a man of business, with whom business is always a sufficient plea for any interruption.

“Say to his lordship that Watson Gray would speak with him in private, on matters of some importance,” he said to an officer in attendance, who knew the estimation in which the scout was held, and at once disappeared to do his bidding.

CHAPTER XXII.

A CONFERENCE WITH THE ENEMY.

LORD RAWDON appears in the history of the war in the southern colonies, to have been one of the sternest leaders of the time : as sanguinary in his temper as Earl Cornwallis, and without any of those impulses of a better temper which have secured for the latter, from one of the American captains, the doubtfully deserved epithet of the “amiable Cornwallis.” Rawdon left himself open neither to the lurking irony nor the obvious flattery of such an epithet. His discipline was rigid to the last degree ; his temper cold and inflexible ; and he seems to have regarded the enemies whom he had the fortune to conquer, as something which, like the spoil he won, he might easily dispose of according to the mood which governed him at the moment, and not under the direction of any fixed principles or written laws. His cruelties, open and specious, are on record ; but these do not concern us at this moment ; and we must admit that the king of England had no representative in all the Revolution who was more constant to his duties or more resolute in their performance. Lord Rawdon had also the merit of being a gentleman ; a hard, cold, inflexible soldier—too free to shed blood, and not politic enough to do so at the right time and in the right place ; obdurate in his purpose and unpliant in his feelings—but still a gentleman : a qualification for his crimes of perhaps very small intrinsic value, but one which he possessed in common with very few, among the many with whom he co-operated during his career in the southern country.

Well acquainted with the character of the Middleton family, it had been, as we have already elsewhere intimated, the policy of this commander, as well as of him by whom he had been preceded, to treat the inmates of the barony with all indulgence. Their popularity with the surrounding country, which it was desirable to conciliate, was a sufficient reason for an indulgence which, in the reckless career of the invaders, they had not been disposed to extend to many; and the time was fast approaching when, in the declining power of their arms, their desperation led them to withdraw even this degree of favor, in the vain hope to coerce the patriotism which they found it impossible to persuade or seduce.

Already had the tone of British superiority been lowered. They could no longer maintain themselves in their strongholds; and, evacuating Camden under the accumulating pressure of the American forces, Rawdon was even now on his way to Ninety-Six, to protract the hour of its downfall. This was the last stronghold left them in the interior, and to delay, not to baffle its assailants, in the work of conquest, was now the only hope of the British commander. The political aspects of the time were all unfavorable to British ascendancy; and the temper of his lordship underwent a corresponding change with his changing fortunes. This could be seen by the Middletons the moment when he announced himself their guest, with the air and manner of one who feels all the changes in his own fortunes, and readily divines the effect of such change upon his reluctant host. He looked, though he did not say:—

“I know that you receive me with reluctance—that my presence is hateful to you—nay, that you perceive and exult in my approaching overthrow—but I still have the power to compel your respect, and I may yet awaken your fears. You shall receive me, and seem glad to do so.”

But the suspicious mood of Rawdon became quieted when, in the gentle and easy deportment of the ladies, he failed to behold the exulting expression of those sentiments which he fancied might fill their bosoms. They were superior to that vulgar sentiment of triumph which shows itself in the ill-disguised grin, or in the reserved and chilling demeanor. A quiet dignity and a

gentle grace were apparent in the conduct of both, in receiving the British chief: and this, in the younger of the two ladies, was mingled with some little tremulousness—the result of her consciousness of what had just before taken place between herself and Clarence Conway—which Rawdon was not unwilling to ascribe to the agitation which his own presence must naturally produce upon a very youthful mind.

This notion pleased his self-complacency, and made the work of soothing more easy to the ladies; but they could still perceive that they had assumed, as enemies, in the recent successes of their countrymen, an increased importance in his eyes, which lessened his smiles, and probably increased their dangers;—and they were soon made to understand this difference in a more direct and decided manner.

Tea, at the time the bane of the country, though the blessing of the ladies, was the crowning dish of the evening repast; and this commodity, though employed simply in compliment to the Briton, gave Rawdon an opportunity to say something on the subject of their loyalty, as he sat down the rich bowl of gold-rimmed China, from which, in that day of a luxury far more ostentatious than ours, though of far less general ostentation, the precious beverage was drunk.

“I rejoice to see, ladies, that your patriotism—so I think you call this flinging away your king and country—takes counsel of good taste, and does not allow you to fling away your tea-bowls also. It would have been a serious trial of faith to your sex to have given up the celestial liquor for more than a season.”

The old lady answered smartly, with no small portion of that spirit which then distinguished the dames of Carolina.

“I can not accept your compliment to our tastes, my lord, at the expense of our patriotism. You perceive that while your lordship drinks tea, we confine ourselves to such beverage only as our milch cattle yield us. Sometimes we regale ourselves on Indian tea, which is made of the Cussenca leaf; but this only when our milk fails us, which is no unfrequent event, since the Black Riders have found their way into our neighborhood.”

“And their presence, madam, is only another evil consequence

of your patriotism. But surely the whole burden of this complaint should not fall upon the Black Riders. There have been such 'Riders' as follow Lee and Sumter in this neighborhood lately; of whom report speaks not more favorably; and who probably love milch cattle quite as well as anybody else. Nay, my fair young mistress," addressing himself to Flora, "there is another Rider, black enough in my eyes, but, perhaps, anything but black in yours. Ha! you can guess who I mean by this description; and I will not name him for your sake;—but let me catch him!" and he raised a threatening finger, while a half smile rested upon his lips. Flora could not altogether suppress the blush which found its way to her cheeks, and was as little able to control the irony that rose at the same time to her lips.

"Ah, my lord, you are too severe upon our poor sex; but—"
She paused, and the color heightened upon her cheeks.

"But what?" he asked, seeing her hesitate.

"But what if he catches you, my lord?"

"Flora, Flora!" said the grandmother, with a look and voice of warning. A momentary gravity overspread the face of Rawdon, and his severe features, under the dark shade of his lowering brows, almost startled Flora with a sentiment of apprehension for her own imprudence; but the good sense and breeding of his lordship came to her relief as well as his own.

"Ah, my fair foe," he said with a smile of good nature, "still incorrigible—still dangerous. The tongues of your Carolina ladies inflict deeper wounds than the swords of your heroes."

"I would you could think so, my lord."

"Why, they do," he answered, "they do."

"Nay, my lord, I will not contradict you, and yet I am trying to persuade myself that you will think otherwise before you come back from 'Ninety-Six.'"

"And do you find the task of self-persuasion difficult? I should think not; and least, you *hope* I will come back?"

"Yes, my lord, I hope so—in safety; but with such opinions as will make you think better of our soldiers, and, in this reason, find a much farther journey necessary."

"What, to Charleston, eh? a forced march back?"

“To England, my lord; to England; at that distance there will be some chance of our being better friends, and we shall then resume our tea.”

“But without the duties?” he said laughing.

“Not altogether, my lord. I, for one, feel all the disposition to be the dutiful friend—if you please the dutiful child—of England;—but not the subject, not the slave! Her victim, rather!”

“Ah, my fair Flora, we wish no sacrifice: none of *you*, at least. We shall drag no damsel to the altar, unless it be to one of her own choosing. But, in return for this sharp speech of yours, fair lady, suffer me to know when Colonel Conway was here last; how long since he has taken his departure, and where I may expect to find him?”

“He has been here, my lord, I frankly tell you, but when he left I will not say. You will find him——”

She hesitated as if in meditation, while her large brilliant eyes shone without a cloud upon her auditor, and her form seemed to dilate in more than feminine majesty as she rose to leave the room:—

“Stay, Miss Middleton,” said his lordship, “you have not told me where I may expect to find Colonel Conway.”

Her answer was immediate, with flashing eyes, and fearless accents.

“You may expect to find him, my lord, wherever an ambush can be laid; whenever a bold soldier may fancy that his sword can make an enemy feel; or a good blow can be struck for the liberties of his country.”

“Humph!” exclaimed Rawdon, gravely, though without displeasure, as Flora left the room. “Your granddaughter, Mrs. Middleton, is quite as fierce a rebel as ever.”

“She is young, my lord, and very enthusiastic, but though she speaks thus, I’m sure she is quite as unhappy at this war as any of us. We all wish it well over.”

“That is saying everything for the right side. To wish it *well* over, madam, is simply to wish our king his own again. But now, that your daughter has withdrawn, let me remind you, Mrs. Middleton, of the royal favor to yourself and family——”

“To *me*, my lord;—to *my* family!” was the reply of the venerable lady, with some appearance of astonishment.

“Yes, madam, in the immunity you have so long enjoyed, when it has been well known to his majesty’s commanders in the South, that your own and the sentiments of your granddaughter—your opinions and wishes—are all unfavorable to his authority.”

“Am I to understand, my lord, that his majesty’s officers are instructed to wage war against the opinions of the women as well as the swords of the men of Carolina?”

“No, madam, far from it; but those opinions sharpen those swords——”

“I am proud, my lord, to think, and hear you acknowledge that such is the case!”

“I had not thought, madam, to have hearkened to this language from your lips. The protection you have enjoyed—your immunities from the confiscation which has usually followed disloyalty—should, I think, have prompted a degree of gratitude for his majesty’s government, which would have saved his representative from such an answer.”

“You mistake, my lord, in some important particulars. My immunities are not due to his majesty’s government. If they are to be spoken of as due anywhere, they must be ascribed to that sense of manliness in the soldiers of both sides in this bloody warfare, all of whom, it seems to me, would have blushed the color of your scarlet, my lord, at doing hurt to two lone women in the wilderness.”

Rawdon did blush with vexation at the retort, as he answered it with a strong effort at gentlemanly composure.

“You have surely mistaken me, Mrs. Middleton. My purpose was simply to intimate that his majesty’s officers have been at some pains, more than is customary in a country which has been so completely covered with contending armies, to preserve from detriment and hurt your possessions and interests.”

“I confess, my lord, the amount of what you now say seems to me to differ little from what was said before. You have forbore to seize my own and my child’s property, though we have been bold enough to think that you had no right to seize it; and

for this you demand our gratitude. My lord, I understand, though you have not spoken, the real purpose which you feel unwilling to declare. I can very well comprehend the difficulties under which his majesty's arms labor at present. I know that their supplies are everywhere cut off; and that they look to what are called 'forced loans' to enable them to prosecute the war."

"You are well informed, I perceive, madam. Am I to understand that the rebel Sumter has been recently your guest?"

"Within ten days, my lord; and my opinions being such as they are, I placed in his hands, for the use of my country, the entire plate of the Middleton barony, and every jewel of value which belonged to myself and child. The few spoons which graced our board to-night, and the bowl in which our children have been baptized from immemorial time, are all that were kept back from the free gift which my feelings made to my friends. These, my lord——"

"Of these, madam, the cause of my king does not make it necessary that I should deprive you," replied Rawdon, with a graceful dignity which left nothing to be complained of. "Your plate would have been important to us, Mrs. Middleton; and you will do us the justice to believe that, knowing as we did its great intrinsic value, we did not make this requisition until the last hour, and then only in obedience to necessities which none but ourselves can comprehend. Believe me, madam, though I am somewhat disappointed, it is a pain spared me, which I would have felt, in depriving you of this family treasure. Nor can I complain, regarding your social attachments with respect, that you have yielded it to the hands of those who will make use of it against me. I must do as well as I can without it. Let me not lose your esteem, my dear madam, because of my proposition, which you will also do me the justice to believe was not less painful than unavoidable."

The message of Watson Gray was received at this moment, and the venerable old lady disappeared with a kind courtesy, leaving his lordship free to the interview with the scout.

"A brave-hearted old woman!" said his lordship, during the brief interval in which he remained alone. "She has given a

monstrous subsidy to Greene, which will keep him on his legs a while, and perhaps trip ours; and yet I can not be angry with her. The stock is a good one; one would almost wish a mother or a daughter of such a noble heart and so fearless a temper. Ah, Gray, I've been looking for you. When did you get over from the Wateree?"

"I left there yesterday morning. I rode all night, and had to make more than two turns between the Hills and the Congaree, to get out of the way of Marion's men, who seem to me to be thicker than ever. Your lordship's for Ninety-Six?"

"Yes; can you tell me anything about it? These rascally horse of Lee and Conway have, I fear, cut off all my messengers to Cruger, as they certainly have cut off everything, in the shape of intelligence, from me."

"Ninety-Six is dreadful hard pressed, your lordship; that's all I know, and that was my knowledge three days ago."

"I fear I shall be too late," said Rawdon. "But you wished to see me on other business. What is it?"

"Does your lordship know that Colonel Conway, with all his troop, has been here within the last hour? Your coming scared him from his roost."

"Indeed, so lately!" said his lordship. "Then he can not even now be far. We must send Major Banks after him;"—and his lordship was about to summon a messenger.

"If I might venture to counsel your lordship, you will do nothing to-night. It will be only to send your detachment into an ambush. This is what Conway expects, and what he will prepare for."

"But we can not suffer him to lie or loiter about our encampment; we must brush him off at the risk of a sting."

"No, your lordship; but a double guard and extra videttes will serve all necessary purposes, and, with the dawn, Major Banks can be in motion. Now, however, Conway is in possession of his own ground, all of which he knows, while Major Banks will be moving to danger with a blind across his eyes."

"You are right; and what has Conway been doing here, and where is his brother—our desperado of the Congaree?"

“Here, also!—within a hundred yards of us.”

“Ha! How is it I have not seen him, then?”

“You will see him shortly, my lord, and in bad condition. The brothers have met, single-handed; and they have brought the old grudge to a finish, I’m afraid. There has been a desperate fight between them, and the captain is very much hurt. It is somewhat doubtful if he ever gets over it.”

“And the other—the rebel—has he escaped?—goes he scot free?”

“That I can’t tell. I should think not, however; for, knowing how Ned Morton hates him, and how many good reasons he has for killing him, he would run all risks of his own life to make a finish of the other. His condition makes me think that the other must be hurt; but his hurts can not be serious, for he certainly got off.”

“How heard you this, Gray?”

“From that rascally fellow, Bannister, otherwise called Suple Jack—the same who carried off Colonel Cruger’s black charger from the Forks of Congaree. The colonel offered twenty guineas to take the scout alive, and I thought I had him at one time to-night. But I caught a Tartar. He gave me a strange trot, and such a shaking as I shall feel in all my bones for a month to come.”

Here Gray gave a full description of the scene, at which his lordship’s muscles relaxed infinitely; and he then proceeded to narrate those other details which led him to the subject of Morton’s attendance. On this head it was necessary to exercise some adroitness. It was no part of Gray’s policy to let Rawdon see that a provincial scout should presume to suspect the integrity of a royal officer, and he studiously forbore, in consequence, to declare those suspicions which he felt of Stockton.

“It is important that the connection of Captain Morton with the Black Riders should not be suspected while he lies here wounded. No guard could possibly save him from the rebels, should they be able to identify his person. Here, he is known as Edward Conway, the brother of one who is no small favorite with the ladies of the barony. This will save him from danger without, and secure him good attendance within. Miss Middle-

ton, herself, will, I think, see to that, if on the score of his connections only. I will provide the guard for Captain Morton, and you can take with you his troop, which is under the command of Lieutenant Stockton, a brave man and a good officer. They are pretty strong, and the greatest daredevils under the sun. You'll get good service out of them, and will need them, too, my lord, if, as I suspect, you are somewhat short of cavalry."

"You think rightly, Gray; and your plans are good. I will leave a surgeon's assistant with Morton, which is all that I can do; but my own surgeon will see to his hurts before he goes."

"Your lordship will be so good as to remember that Captain Morton is no more than Mr. Conway here."

"Ay, ay; but what noise is that below?"

"The captain's body, I reckon. Will your lordship look at him?"

"Is he sensible—conscious?"

"I think not yet, my lord. He was in a swoon when I left him, in consequence of loss of blood."

"It will not need then. I will send Mr. Coppinger to examine his hurts, and as I am to know nothing about him, you must take your own course to get him domiciled among the ladies."

"That is easily done, your lordship," said Gray, retiring; "I have your lordship's permission to make the necessary arrangements."

"You have; send me Lieutenant Farrington, who waits without," said Rawdon, as the other left the room.

It scarcely need be said that the wily Gray succeeded in all his present purposes. His opinions were esteemed to be sufficiently sound, by his lordship, to be followed implicitly. Lieutenant Stockton was relieved from the care of his captain, and ordered to place himself, with his whole troop, under the command of Major Banks, of the British cavalry; and the bare intimation of Edward Conway's situation, to the ladies of the barony, secured for the wounded man one of the most comfortable chambers in the mansion. Nor did Watson Gray neglect the forlorn and outcast damsel whom John Bannister had commended to his care. An adjoining apartment was readily procured for her in the same spacious dwelling, and the surgeon's aid was

solicited for the poor victim as soon as it had been bestowed upon her betrayer. We leave Edward Conway in the same house with Flora Middleton—but as yet utterly unconscious of her presence and near neighborhood—while we pursue the route taken by his brother.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A MIDNIGHT ATTACK—A PRISONER.

CLARENCE CONWAY was not far distant from the British camp, and was soon found by John Bannister, after the latter had taken his leave of Watson Gray. The partisan had already reached his troop, and got it in partial readiness for immediate exercise. His force was little more than that of a captain's command, consisting of some eighty-five men all told; but, on occasion, his regiment might be made complete. Such fluctuations were constant in the American army; and were inevitably consequent to the miserable system then prevalent in regard to militia service. Marion's brigade has been known to range from eighty to eight hundred men; nor was this difference, in scarcely any case, the result of disaster. The volunteers came and went, according to circumstances of more or less necessity, and sometimes as it suited their inclinations.

There were always good reasons for this seeming laxity of discipline, as well because of the pressure of a far superior foe, as in the exhausted condition of the country of Carolina; where, for a space of nearly two years, few crops of any kind had been planted; and it became next to impossible to find food and forage for any large body of men and horse, for any considerable time together. The service was of a sort, also, to render small bodies of horse far more useful than grand armies; and where food was to be procured, and brought from a great distance, such detachments were of the very last importance. Conway's regiment, according to the necessities of the service, was in half

a dozen hands ; Sumter had a portion of it at this very moment on the Santee ; Marion on the Pedee ; while Greene exercised the remaining divisions as Conway, employed the small body in his immediate command—in cutting off supplies, intercepting messengers, overawing the disaffected, and hanging upon the skirts of the enemy while they marched, as in the case of Rawdon's army, at this very time, in a body too large for any more bold procedure.

Bannister found his leader well prepared for movement, and anxiously awaiting him. The former told his story in a few words, not entirely omitting the ludicrous passages which had taken place between himself and Gray. As the connection between this latter person and Edward Morton was very well known to Clarence, the mind of the latter was rendered rather more easy on the subject of his brother. He knew that Morton was of sufficient importance to the British army, to make his restoration the particular charge of Rawdon ; but his satisfaction on this subject was somewhat qualified when he remembered that the patient would, necessarily, become an occupant of the same dwelling with Flora Middleton. His anxieties were such as are natural enough to the lover, who, in such cases, will always be apt to fancy and to fear a thousand evil influences. He had no doubts of the firmness and fidelity of Flora ; but, knowing the evil connections of Morton, he dreaded lest the latter should find some means to abuse the hospitality which he well knew would be accorded him. These thoughts were troublesome enough to render activity desirable by way of relief ; and after a brief space given to consultation with his favorite scout, and little private meditation, he determined to beat up the quarters of Rawdon before morning.

It was midnight when Bannister began to bestir himself and his comrades for this purpose. The troop had been suffered to snatch a few hours of repose on the edge of a little bay, that stretched itself nearly to the river bank on one hand, and to the main road of the country on the other ; in such a position of security, and under such good watch, that no apprehension could be excited for their safety. A dense thicket covered their front ; beyond, and lying between the thicket and the barony,

was an open pine wood, the undergrowth being kept down by the destructive practice, still barbarously continued in the south, of firing the woods annually in the opening of the spring. This wood was traversed by the scouts of Conway, who saw the advanced videttes of the British, without suffering themselves to be seen, and gradually receded as the latter continued to approach; still, however, keeping a keen eye upon the stations which they severally assumed.

On the present occasion, following the suggestions of Watson Gray, Lord Rawdon had doubled his sentries, and increased the usual number of videttes. His post was well guarded, though nothing could have been more idle than the fear, that a force such as he commanded could be securely annoyed by any of the roving squads of horse which the Americans had dispersed about the country. But, at this time, the timidity of the British increased hourly in due degree with the increased audacity of the Americans. There was too much at stake to suffer any British commander to omit any of the usual safeguards of an army; and their plans and performances, from this period, show a degree of scrupulous caution, which at certain periods of strife—and this was one of them in their situation—may, with justice, be considered imbecility. To dash for a moment into the camp of the British, and carry off a group of captives, was one of the ordinary proofs of the novel confidence which the partisans had acquired of their own prowess, during the year in progress.

Conway, however, was not the man to do anything rashly at such a moment. If caution was necessary to the British, prudence was also a high virtue, at this particular juncture, with the Americans. Before he led his men forward, he determined to explore the British camp himself; and, having arranged with Bannister for a concerted espionage, the two went forward for this purpose, though on different routes. Conway pursued the way through the pine-forest in front, while Bannister took an opposite but parallel course along the high road, which he crossed for this purpose. They were absent about two hours, and, in the meantime, everything was quiet enough in the camps. At the end of this period they returned in safety; and a mutual

report enabled them to determine upon the course which they were to take.

They had satisfied themselves of the true position of the British army, and discovered, that while the sentries were doubled on the path to which it was advancing, they had not conceived it necessary to place more than an ordinary watch on that which they had passed over during the day. By making a small circuit of a mile and a half along a negro footpath, which carried them through a swamp on the right, Conway found that he could get into the British rear, and probably use the sabre to advantage on the edge of the encampment. This was to be done with the main body of the troop, while a feint was to be made with the residue along the better guarded British line in front.

It was near two o'clock in the morning when the preparations of the partisans were completed; and John Bannister had already gathered together the division which had been assigned him, when his sleeve was plucked by a soldier whose person he could not distinguish in the shadows where they stood. This person called him aside for a moment, and Bannister then discovered him to be the father of poor Mary Clarkson. This man was a sullen, dark, solitary, but unsubdued spirit—who said nothing, felt nothing, asked for nothing, complained of nothing, and had but one desire in the world. John Bannister had missed sight of Clarkson for some time till now; and, perhaps, had rather avoided him since his return from the scene in which his unlucky arm inflicted the unintentional injury upon his unhappy daughter. He now shrunk to look upon the miserable old man; and when he spoke to him, it was with a feeling of compunctious sorrow, almost as great as he would have felt had he himself inflicted upon the unhappy father the vital injury which was due to Edward Morton only.

“You ha'n't spoke to me about going with you, Jack Bannister,” said Clarkson, with some irritation in his tones; “but I'm going with you jest the same.”

“No, Jake, you're to keep with Lieutenant Peyton's party, that's to make a feint here in front. He'll call you up, the moment we set off.”

"I don't stay with him, Jack; I must keep with you or the colonel," said the man, doggedly.

"But why, Jake? why wou't you stay?"

"You're going to strike at the camp, ain't you? You'll ride up to the barony, perhaps?"

"May be so—there's no tellin' yet."

"That's why I want to go with you or the colonel."

"Well now Jake, I'd much rather you'd stay with the lieutenant."

"It's onpossible," said Clarkson, obstinately. "Look you, Jack Bannister, I don't take it as friendly, that you didn't tell me that Ned Conway was at the barony."

"How do you know? who told you?" demanded the woodman in some astonishment.

"Never you mind. I know that you saw him there; and what's more, I know that the colonel fou't with him, and 's hurt him mightily. But I know he's not got what's to finish him; and I'll go where there's any chance to do it."

"Lord, Jake, there's no chance. We'll not get nigher to the camp than the outposts, and if we can carry off a few outskairters, it's all we look for. Ned Conway is at the house, I reckon, suug in his bed, with more than a thousand men close round him. There's no chance for you to reach him."

"I reckon I can work through all of them, John Bannister, seeing what's my business. I must go with you or the colonel, no mistake."

Bannister knew his man—knew how idle was everything like expostulation; and though he also well knew that such a determination as Clarkson expressed was only likely to insure his being knocked on the head sooner than any of the rest, yet, as that was only a chance of war among military philosophers, he let him have his own way, and quietly enrolled him with the rest.

It would have been a study for the painter to have seen the savage old man reload his rifle, pick the touchhole, put in extra priming, and turn the bullet in his jaws, ere he wrapped it in the greasy fold of buckskin of which his patches were made.

"Poor old fellow!" muttered Bannister to himself as he beheld these operations. I'm thinking he says a prayer every

time he chooses a bullet; I'm sure he does whenever he's grinding his knife."

It was with some reluctance that Clarkson was persuaded to gird a sabre at his side. The instrument was new to his hand, but he clutched it with sufficient familiarity when Bannister told him it was heavy and sharp enough to cleave a man through from his shoulder to his thigh.

All being now in readiness, Conway gave instructions to Lieutenant Peyton to make no movement on the front, until sufficient time had been allowed him for getting into the rear of the encampment; and then to give the alarm, and beat up the enemy's quarters, with all the clamor he could command. By two and two, he led his troops forward, each man on foot and guiding his steed with shortened rein, until they had passed the narrow open neck of high land on which the public road ran, and which separated the one bay, which he had lately occupied, from another to which he now bent his steps. A British vidette was stationed not more than a hundred yards from the point of passage, and great indeed were the anxieties of Clarence and of all, until the horses ceased to traverse the highland, and entered upon the mucky unresounding footing of the swamp.

But they escaped without notice. The British sentinel was in his drowsiest mood—drunk perhaps—and suffered the passage to be effected without alarm. The last two files were now entirely beyond his hearing, and Conway, throwing off the difficult restraint which his impatience felt as a curb and bit, gave orders to his followers to mount and follow him at as swift a pace as possible, through the negro trail which they now traversed. Then, a silence as awful as that of the grave descended upon the forest which he had left, and prevailed over the region for a space of nearly two hours more; when Lieutenant Peyton prepared to make the feint which was to divert the attention of the British camp from the point which was more certainly threatened. With twenty men, judiciously scattered along the front, so as to present an object of equal alarm to the whole line of the enemy's sentries, he slowly advanced, and having that advantage which arises from a perfect knowledge of his ground, his approach remained unseen and unsuspected until it was almost

possible for his pistols to be emptied with some prospect of each bullet being made to tell upon its separate victim.

A silence almost equally great prevailed over that vast hive of human hearts which was then beating within the immediate precincts of the barony. Sleep had possessed the great body of its inmates. Exhaustion had done its work. The forced marches of Lord Rawdon, stimulated as they had been by the fear of losing the last and strongest outposts of his government, together with its brave and numerous garrison, had severely tested the strength and the spirit of his troops, and deep was the lethargy of all those to whom the privilege of sleep had been accorded. Nor were those to whom sleep had been expressly denied, in a condition of much more ability and consciousness. The sentinels, though strictly cautioned, had suffered themselves to be persuaded that there could be no danger in a region in which they well knew there was no enemy embodied in sufficient force to make itself feared by their own; and if they had not formally yielded themselves up to sleep upon their places of watch, they at least made no serious effort to escape its grateful influences, and were no longer vigilant as they would have been in a time of danger. Throughout the avenue, and ranged along the grounds of the park which lay beside it, two thousand men, in groups, lay upon their arms, in happy slumber, uncovered to the serene sky of May; while, in the silvery glances of the soft moonlight, which glistened brightly from his steel cap and polished bayonet, the drowsy sentinel performed his weary round of watch; or, leaning in half consciousness only, against the massive trunk of some ancient oak, yielded himself, in momentary forgetfulness, to dream of the green island or the heathery highlands of his European home.

In the mansion where Lord Rawdon had taken up his abode, the same silence prevailed, but not the same degree of apathy. Busy and sad hearts, and suffering forms, were wakeful in its several chambers. Rawdon himself slept; but, in the apartment assigned to the chief of the Black Riders, Watson Gray was an anxious watcher. The surgeon had examined and dressed the wounds of the former, upon which he had as yet declined to give an opinion. Conway had lost much blood, and this, Gray

very well knew, was rather favorable than otherwise to his condition. The patient lay, not sleeping, perhaps, but with his eyes closed and his senses seemingly unobservant. An occasional groan escaped him, as if unconsciously. Exhaustion, rather than repose, was signified by his quiescence.

In another part of the house lay his suffering victim. The mind of Mary Clarkson wandered in all the misdirected heat of delirium, the result equally of mental and physical pain. By her side sat Flora Middleton. The sex of the poor victim had been made known to the mistress of the mansion, through the medium of the servants, by the timely management of Watson Gray; but that wily associate of the outlaw chief, had not omitted the opportunity which it afforded him of turning the event to favorable account in behalf of the man he served so faithfully.

"It's a poor girl," he said to the servant to whom his information was intrusted, "that followed Colonel Conway from the Congaree, and when he and his brother fought by the vault, which they did about your young mistress, the poor girl jumped between them to save the colonel, and got her hurts that way. She is only dressed in boy's clothes that she mightn't be known among the troop."

The falsehood found its way to the ears for which it was intended; and the proud heart of Flora Middleton rose in indignation as she heard it.

"But the wretched woman is yet a woman, and she's suffering," was the humane sentiment with which she silenced the communicative negro. "She is a woman, whatever may be her vices, and I will see to her myself."

And when she beheld her, she could no longer scorn the frail victim of a misplaced affection and a reckless lust.

Emaciated and wan, the miserable girl sang and gibbered with all the unconcern of the confirmed maniac; and prated at intervals of the childish follies which are usually the prime sources of pleasure to the child. She spoke of girlish wants and girlish pleasures, and ran on in a manner of inconsiderate merriment, which was of all things the most mournful and heart-sickening to contemplate. But she seemed neither to see nor hear. It was only when the surgeon pressed his hand upon the wounded skull

that she lapsed away into utter silence, which was accompanied by a vacant stare upon the operator, so hideous in the deathlike imbecility which it expressed, as to make Flora shudder and turn away with a sickening horror that took from her all strength to serve or to assist. It was only when the surgeon had finished the operations which he deemed necessary, that she could resume strength to return to the chamber, and the patient then lay in a condition of stupor that secured her effectual silence for the time.

Not a word now escaped her lips; but a choking sob occasionally heaved her bosom as if with convulsion; and amply denoted the "perilous stuff" which lay thick and deadly about her heart. Flora Middleton sat beside her, with one female servant in attendance, when all the rest had retired. Her personal presence was not necessary, but she could not sleep on account of the troublesome and humiliating fancies which possessed her, on the subject of the story which she had heard in regard to Clarence Conway. That she should have surrendered her best affections to one who could thus abuse and degrade the warmest, if not the loftiest devotion of her sex, was, indeed, a subject of humiliating consideration to a spirit so proud as hers; and it was with a feeling of relief that the sudden sharp shot of the assault, and the wild ringing of the midnight trumpet, while it denoted the approach of unexpected conflict, disturbed the train of painful thought into which her mind had unavoidably fallen.

The tumult without was as wild and terrible as it had been sudden. A moment of the deepest midnight stillness had been succeeded by one of the fiercest uproar. Excited, rather than alarmed, she hurried from the chamber, and encountered at the head of the stairway the person of Lord Rawdon, who was joined a moment after by Watson Gray. His lordship saw her, and a smile, which was scarcely one of good nature, overspread his countenance as he remarked—

"Your rebel colonel is busy among us, Miss Middleton;—he is a bold fellow, but will pay for his rashness."

"I told your lordship that you would soon find him, but he is even more easy of access than I thought him," was the reply

of the maiden, who, at the moment, had forgotten everything that she had ever heard to her lover's disadvantage, and now glowed with all the natural pride of one who joyed in the courage of her countryman.

"I trust that he will wait to receive my acknowledgments for his early attentions;" was the answer of his lordship, uttered through his closed teeth, as he hurried down the steps.

But the wish of his lordship was not gratified. The alarm was not of long continuance, though, in the brief space of time which it had occupied, it had been sharp in equal degree, and the surprise of the camp had been made with as much success as its audacity deserved. The sentries had been hewn down at their posts, one patrol entirely cut off, and a party of the assailants, penetrating to the head of the avenue, had cut in pieces a half score of Hessians before they had well started from their slumbers. The whole affair had been the work of a few moments only, and when the British were in condition to meet the invader, there was no enemy to be found. They had dissipated with the flexibility of the atmosphere, in the obscure haze of which they completely vanished from the eyes of the pursuing and vengeance-breathing soldiery.

In the lower hall of the mansion, Lord Rawdon received the report of the officers of the night, to whom, it may be supposed, his countenance was in no respect gracious. Naturally stern of temper, the annoyance was calculated to increase its severity, and add to the habitual harshness of his manner. He stood against the chimney-place, as the several officers in command made their appearance, and his keen eyes examined them with frowning expression from beneath the thick bushy brows, which were now contracted into one overhanging roof, and almost concealed the orbs in turn from the sight of those whom they surveyed. Sharp, indeed, was the examination which followed, and bitter, though brief, were the various comments which his lordship made on the several events of the evening as they were reported in his hearing.

"Majoribanks," said he, "you were in charge of the camp appointments for the night. You will make your full returns at morning of the officers on duty; and let them report to you the

names of the last relief. What is the report you make of the camp now? What is the killed, wounded, and missing?"

The portly, fine-looking, and truly noble officer whom he addressed, answered with equal ease and dignity.

"The returns are ready for your lordship now," placing the papers in his hands—"this, your lordship will perceive, is the list of officers and guards on duty; and here is a brief summary of the killed and wounded, which are found. It will need an inspection of the rolls of companies to ascertain the missing, and this can not be so well done till daylight."

"'Tis well, sir—you are prompt and ready. I wish your officers of the night had known their duty so well." And with this speech he bestowed upon the surrounding group a single glance of vexation and reproof.

"Humph!" he exclaimed as he read—"Can it be possible! So many slain outright; good fellows too—not apt to sleep upon their posts"—and he enumerated with his voice and finger—"Fergus, Childs, Spohrs, Dilworth, Moony, Wagner—fourteen slain and as many wounded! D—nation! These rascals must have been drunk, or there has been treachery!"

He crumpled the memorandum in his hands, and, utterly unable to control his indignation, flung it from him, and trampled it on the floor.

"By heavens, these beggarly rebels will learn to walk by noonday into our camps, and hew and havoc where they think proper. The British name will be a subject for their mockery; and, as for our valor!—for shame, for shame, gentlemen; what will be thought of this proceeding? what report shall I make of this conduct to our king?"

He strode, unanswerd, to and fro, along the unoccupied portion of the hall; the officers, under his rebuke, looking with downcast eyes, that did not once venture to meet his glance.

"And what of the enemy, Majoribanks? Have they got off in utter safety? If I mistake not, I heard a full platoon from the grenadiers——"

"We have found but one dead body, your lordship."

"Indeed!—but one body. Oh! this is very rare success! **They** will fight us all night, and every night, on the same

terms :” and his lordship laughed outright in very chagrin and bitterness.

“And one prisoner ;”—continued Majoribanks.

“Ah :—one prisoner ! Well, you hung him, did you ?”

“No, your lordship : we did not hang him ;” was the cold but respectful answer of Majoribanks. “We knew not that such a proceeding would be either proper or desirable.”

Rawdon’s eyes gleamed with a savage keenness of glance on the speaker, as he replied—

“Ha ! you did not, eh ? Well, let it be done instantly ! I will answer for its propriety. Gray,” he continued, turning to the scout, who stood at the entrance, “see to it. You shall be our provost for the occasion. Find out the nearest tree—not in sight of the dwelling, mark me—and let the rope be a good one. Let him be hung with due propriety.”

Majoribanks turned away to conceal his emotion, while Gray replied—

“May it please your lordship, it might be advisable to examine the person before hanging him. He can probably give you some valuable intelligence—something, perhaps, about ‘Ninety-Six.’”

“True, true !—it does please me. Bring him before us. I will examine him myself.”

An officer disappeared, and a few moments only had elapsed when, conducted by a file of soldiers, our old associate John Bannister was placed before the British commander.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A REPRIEVE FROM THE GALLOW'S.

THE sturdy boatman of the Congaree was in no ways daunted when dragged into that imposing presence. On the contrary, his person seemed to have risen in elevation and acquired new erectness, in defiance of the cords which secured his arms, and in spite of an evident halt in his walk, the consequence of some injury which he had probably sustained in the *melée* which had just taken place. An easy but not offensive smile was upon his countenance as he entered, and though erect and manly, there was nothing insolent or ostentatious in his carriage. He bowed his head respectfully, first to his lordship and then to the surrounding officers, and having advanced almost to the centre of the room, paused in waiting and without a word. Rawdon surveyed his person with little interest, and was evidently annoyed by the coolness, deliberation, and conscious dignity of the woodman's bearing.

"Who are you, fellow?" he demanded.

"My name's John Bannister, your lordship. I'm a sort of scouting serjeant, when I'm in the woods, for Col. Conway's regiment; but with my hands hitched behind me, jest now, I don't feel as if I was anybody."

"Your sense of insignificance is more likely to be increased than diminished, fellow! Speak up and tell us what you know. Your master! Where is he now?"

"Well, your lordship, if I've rightly larned my catechism, he's looking down upon us now, and listening to every word that's said."

"See to the doors and windows," exclaimed Rawdon hastily, as he put his hand upon his sword, while his flashing eyes turned to the windows of the apartment:—"who knows but we

may have another visit from this audacious rebel. He has had every encouragement to come again."

A silent chuckle of the scout attested his satisfaction at the mistake into which he had led his captor, in consequence of his peculiar modes of speech and thinking.

"What does the fellow mean by this insolence? Speak, sirrah, ere I send you to the halbirds!"

"And if your lordship did, I reckon I should speak pretty much as I do now. Your lordship asked me where my master is; and as I know no master but God Almighty, I reckon I answered no more than rightly, when I said he was looking, jest this very moment, down upon our proceeding. By the catechis' I was always taught that he was pretty much here, thar, and every whar;—a sort of scout for the whole univarse, that don't want for any sleep, and never made a false count of the number sent out agin him——"

"Is the fellow mad?" demanded Rawdon, with impatience, interrupting the woodman, who seemed very well disposed to expatiate longer upon this copious subject. "Who knows anything of this fellow?"

"I do, your lordship," whispered Watson Gray, but in tones that reached the ears of Bannister. "He's the same person that I told you of to-night—he's the famous scout that Col. Cruger offered twenty guineas for, for stealing his horse."

The last words awakened all Bannister's indignation, which he expressed without heeding the presence in which he stood.

"Look you, Watson Gray," said he, "that's not so genteel, all things considerin'; and I'll look to you to answer it some day. The horse was a fair prize, taken from the enemy's quarters at the resk of my neck——"

"That risk is not over, scoundrel; and that you may be made justly sensible of it, let the provost take him hence to a tree. Let it be done at once. We shall save Cruger his twenty guineas."

Here Watson Gray again whispered in the ears of his lordship.

"Ah, true," said the latter: then, addressing Bannister, he asked in accents of unusual mildness:—

“Are you willing to save your life, my good fellow? Speak quickly, for we have little time to waste, and you have none to spare.”

“Well, I reckon, your lordship, as I’m a good fellow, I oughtn’t to be afraid either to live or to die; though, if the choice is given me, living’s my preference at this present. I might have a different choice next week, or even to-morrow, for anything I know jest now.”

“Too many words by half, sirrah. Hear me: you can save your life by proving yourself honest once in a way. Speak the truth to all the questions I ask you, and no prevarication.”

“I’ll try, your lordship,” said the scout quietly, as he turned a huge quid of tobacco in his mouth and voided it behind him on the floor, with a coolness which did not lessen his lordship’s indignation.

“How many men were with your colonel in this assault to-night?”

“Well, about thirty men, I reckon—which wa’n’t more than half his force: t’other half played with the sentinels along the woods above.”

“Thirty men! Was ever heard the like! Thirty men to beat up the quarters of a British general, and ride over a whole army of two thousand men!”

“There’s more, I reckon, your lordship,” said Gray, in a whisper, “Colonel Conway sometimes has a whole regiment and I’ve seldom known him with less than a hundred.”

“Hark ye, fellow, if you are found in a falsehood, that instant I send you to the gallows,” exclaimed Rawdon, sternly, addressing the scout.

“And if your lordship believes a man that does his talking in a whisper, in preference to him that speaks out, it’s likely you’d send all your prisoners thar. It’s no use for *me* to tell you the truth, when there’s a man behind you that’s been known on the Congaree ever since I was knee-high to a splinter, to be a born liar. Ef he’s let, in a whisper, to outtalk a man that does his talking outright, and like a man, aboveboard, then there’s but little use in my opening my mouth at all. Ef you believe *him*, you can’t believe *me*—though, to speak a truth that there’s no

denying, I ain't very willing to tell you, lordship anything about the consarns of the troop. I'm jub'ous ef that ain't treasonable."

"You are very scrupulous all at once, my fine fellow—but, whether you are believed or not, we shall still hear what you have to say. Does the garrison at 'Ninety-Six' hold out?"

"I reckon not now. It did yesterday morning, but 'twas mighty hard pushed then; and as we caught all your messengers, and got all your letters to Colonel Cruger, I'm thinking he's given in, seeing there was no sort of chance of your lordship's commg.

"D—nation! I sent two messengers since Sunday."

"I reckon your lordship's count ain't altogether right; for I myself caught three. I choked one chap till he emptied his throat of a mighty small scrap of intelligence that he had curled up like a piece of honest pigtail in his jaws; and we physicked another before he surrendered the screw-bullet that he swallowed. The third one gin up his paper like a good fellow, j'ined our troop, and helped us powerful well in the little brush we made in the avenue to-night. He's a big fellow, a Dutchman by birth, that come out of the forks of Edisto. His name's a mighty hard one to spell, and I can't say that I altogether remember it; but he showed us five guineas that your lordship gin him to go to 'Ninety-Six,' and I reckon he'd ha' gone if we hadn't caught him. He fou't powerful well to-night, for I watched him."

John Bannister was evidently not the person from whom much intelligence could be extracted, though he was quite liberal in yielding that which it gave his lordship little pleasure to hear. Every word which he uttered seemed to be peculiarly chosen to mortify his captors. Not that the worthy scout had any such intention, for he well knew the danger to himself of any such proceeding; and, as we have said before, his manner, though loftier than usual, was unobtrusive, and certainly never intended anything like insolence. His free speech came from his frank nature, which poured forth the honest feelings of his mind without much restraint, and utterly regardless of the situation in which he stood. He was just sufficiently cautious to

baffle his examiners on every subject, the truth of which might affect unfavorably the troop and the service in which it was engaged. Rawdon soon discerned the character of the person with whom he had to deal; and, provoked beyond patience by the annoying detail the scout had given of the capture of his three messengers, he thus summarily cut short the conference:

“You are a good scout, John Bannister, and your loss, I have no doubt, will be severely felt by your leader. Provost, take him to the end of the lane, give him three minutes for prayer, and then hang him to the tallest tree in front of the avenue. Let him hang till daylight, that the Irish regiments may see and take warning from the spectacle. It may cure a few of them of the disease of desertion, which is so apt to afflict so many. Go, my good Bannister, my provost will see to your remaining wants. I think your colonel will feel your loss very much.”

“I’m jest now of the same opinion, your lordship,” replied the scout, composedly; “but I’m not thinking he’s so nigh losing me altogether. I don’t think my neck in so much danger yet, because I reckon your lordship won’t be so venturesome as to hang up a prisoner-of-war, taken in an honest scrimmage.”

“Ah! that is *your* opinion. We differ! Take him hence, Provost, and do as I bid you. Let it be done at once. A short shrift saves many unpleasant reflections.”

Such was the cool, stern decision of his lordship, to whose haughty mind the *sang froid* of Bannister was eminently insulting.

“I would jest like to let your lordship know before I leave you——” was the beginning of another speech of Bannister’s, which the angry gesture of Rawdon did not suffer him to finish. The provost and his attendants seized on the prisoner, in obedience to the lifted finger of his lordship, and were about to hurry him, still speaking, from the apartment, when they were stopped at the door by the sudden entrance of Flora Middleton.

“Stay!” she exclaimed, addressing the officer—“stay, till I have spoken with his lordship.”

Rawdon started back at beholding her, and could not refrain from expressing his surprise at her presence.

"At this time of the night, Miss Middleton, and here?"

"Very improper conduct, your lordship would intimate, for a young lady; but the circumstances must excuse the proceeding. I come to you, sir, in behalf of this poor man, who is your prisoner, and whom I understand you are about to execute, in violation of the laws of humanity, and, as I believe, the laws of war."

His lordship was evidently annoyed.

"You have chosen a very unnecessary labor, Miss Middleton, and pardon me if I think a very unbecoming one. I may be permitted, surely, to know what the laws of war require, and greatly regret that Miss Middleton can not believe me sufficiently well informed in regard to those of humanity."

"Pardon me, my lord, if, in my excited emotions, my words should happen to offend. I do not mean offence. I would not intrude upon a scene like this, and can not think that my interposition to save life, and to prevent murder, can properly be called an unbecoming interference."

"Murder!" muttered his lordship through his closed teeth, while—as if to prevent his frowns from addressing themselves to the fair intruder—he was compelled to avert his face.

"Yes, my lord, murder; for I know this man to be as worthy and honest a citizen as ever lived on the Congaree. He has always been my friend and the friend of the family. He has never avowed his loyalty to the king—never taken protection; but, from the first, has been in arms, under either Pickens or Sumter, in opposition to his majesty. The fate of war throws him into your hands——"

"And he must abide it, lady. He has been such a consistent rebel, according to your own showing, that he well deserves his fate. Provost, do your duty!"

"My lord, my lord, can it be that you will not grant my prayer—that you will not spare him?"

"It would give me pleasure to grant any application to one so fair and friendly, but——"

"Oh, deal not in this vain language at such a time, my lord. Do not this great wrong. Let not your military pride seduce you into an inhumanity which you will remember in after days with dread and sorrow. Already they charge you with

blood wantonly shed at Camden—too much blood—the blood of the old and young—of the gray-headed man and the beardless boy alike. But, I believe it not, my lord—no! no! Turn not away from me in anger—I believe it not—I would not wish to believe it.”

“Too much, too much!” murmured Majoribanks, as he regarded the fair speaker, and saw the dark spot turn to crimson on the brow of the stern and savage captain. He well perceived, whatever might have been his hopes of her pleading before, that her last allusion to the Camden massacres had spoiled the effect of all.

“Your entreaty is in vain, Miss Middleton. The man is doomed. He shall be an example to warn others against shooting down sentinels at midnight.”

“No! no! Be not inflexible—spare him; on my knees, I implore you, my lord. I have known him long, and always worthily; he is my friend, and a noble-hearted creature. Send not such a fellow to the gallows; send the ruffian, the murderer, the spy, but not a worthy man like this.”

“Rise, Miss Middleton; I should be sorry to see you kneel, without succeeding in your prayer, either to God or mortal.”

“You grant it, then!” she exclaimed eagerly, as he raised her from the floor.

“Impossible! The man must die.”

She recoiled from his hands, regarded him with a silent but searching expression of eye, then turned to the spot where John Bannister stood. The worthy scout no longer remained unmoved. Her interposition had softened the poor fellow, whom the threatening danger from his foes had only strengthened and made inflexible and firm. He now met her glance of bitterness and grief, while a smile mingled sweetly upon his face with the big tear which was swelling in his eye.

“God bless you, my dear miss Flora!—you’re an angel, if ever there was one on such a place as airth; and I’m jest now thankful to God for putting me in this fix, ef it’s only that I might know how airnestly and sweetly he could send his angel to plead in favor of a rough old Congaree boatman like me. But don’t you be scared, for they can’t do me any hurt after all;

and if his lordship had only listened to me a leetle while longer at first, he'd ha' been able to have said the handsome thing, and consented to all you axed him. Look here, my lord, 'twon't do to hang me, unless you'd like to lose a better man in the bargain."

A look of inquiry was all that his lordship deigned the speaker, who, turning to the provost, begged him to take his grasp from his shoulder.

"I can't run, you see, ef I wanted to, and somehow I never could talk to my own liking, when I had the feel of an inemy's hand upon me."

"Speak up, fellow," said Majoribanks, who saw the increasing vexation of Rawdon, "and tell his lordship what you mean."

"Well, the long and short of the matter's this, your lordship. If you look at your roll, I reckon you'll find a handsome young cappin, or mou't-be a major, among your missing. I made him a prisoner myself, at the head of the avenue, on the very first charge to-night, and I know they've got him safe among my people; and his neck must be a sort of make-weight agin mine I ain't of much 'count anyhow, but the 'Cougaree Blues' has a sort of liking for me, and they can find any quantity of rope and tree when there's a need for it. If you hang me, they'll hang him, and your lordship can tell best whether he's worth looking after or not. It's a thing for calculation only."

"Is this the case? Is there any officer missing?" demanded Rawdon, with a tone of suppressed but bitter feeling.

"Two, your lordship," replied the lieutenant of the night—"Major Penfield and Captain Withers."

"They *should* hang! They deserve it!" exclaimed Rawdon; but an audible murmur from the bottom of the hall, warned him of the danger of trying experiments upon the temper of troops who had just effected a painful forced march, and had before them a continuation of the same, and even severer duties.

"Take the prisoner away, and let him be well guarded," said his lordship.

Flora Middleton, relieved by this order, gave but a single glance of satisfaction to the woodman, as she glided out of the apartment⁺

With the dawn of day the British army was under arms, and preparing to depart. Our heroine, who had enjoyed no rest during the night, and had felt no desire for it, under the numerous anxieties and painful feelings which filled her heart, took her station in the balcony, where she could witness all their movements. And no more imposing array had ever gratified her eyes. Lord Rawdon was then in command of the very élite of the British army. The hardy and well-trying provincial loyalists formed the nucleus of the efficient force of near three thousand men, which he commanded; and these, many of them well mounted, and employed as dragoons and riflemen at pleasure, were, in reality, the chief reliance of his government. The Hessians had been well thinned by the harassing warfare of two seasons, and were neither numerous nor daring; but nothing could exceed the splendid appearance of the principal force which he brought with him from Charleston, consisting of three full regiments, fresh from Ireland, with all the glow of European health upon their cheeks, full-framed, strong and active; martial in their carriage, bold in action, and quite as full of vivacity as courage.

Flora Middleton beheld them as they marched forward beneath her eyes, with mingling sentiments of pity and admiration. Poor fellows! They were destined to be terribly thinned and humbled by the sabre of the cavalry, the deadly aim of the rifle, and that more crushing enemy of all, the pestilential malaria of the southern swamps. How many of that glowing and numerous cavalcade were destined to leave their bones along the banks of the Wateree and Santee, in their long and arduous marchings and counter-marchings, and in the painful and perilous flight which followed to the Eutaws, and from the Eutaws to Charleston. On this flight, scarce two months after, fifty of these brave fellows dropped down, dead in the ranks, in a single day; the victims of fatigue, heat and a climate which mocked equally their muscle, their courage, and vivacity; and which not even the natives at that season could endure without peril. The brave and generous Majoribanks himself—the most honorable and valiant of enemies—little did Flora Middleton fancy, as he passed his sword-point to the earth in courteous salute,

and smiled his farewell, while marching at the head of his battalion beneath the balcony, that he, too, was one of those who should find his grave along the highways of Carolina, immediately after the ablest of his achievements at Eutaw, where to him, in particular, was due the rescue of the British lion from the claws of the now triumphant eagle.

CHAPTER XXV.

NINETY-SIX—A FLIGHT BY NIGHT.

CLARENCE CONWAY, with a single exception, had every reason to be satisfied with the result of his expedition. He had lost but one man slain; and but two were missing. One of these, as we have seen, was John Bannister; the other was the unhappy father of Mary Clarkson. The reader is already apprized of the situation of the former; of the latter neither party had any present knowledge. Conway was utterly ignorant, and very anxious about the fate of his trusty agent. The loss of John Bannister could not be compensated to him, by any successes, whether as a soldier or a man. He was incomparable as a scout; almost as much so in personal conflict; superior in judgment in most matters relating to partisan warfare; but, over all, he was the friend, the ever-faithful, the fond; having an affection for his leader like that of Jonathan of old, surpassing the love of woman.

Clarence Conway did full justice to this affection. He loitered and lingered long that night before leaving the field of conflict, in the hope to see the trusty fellow reappear; and slow indeed were his parting footsteps when, at the dawn of day, he set his little band in motion for the Saluda. This measure was now become one of stern necessity. He had done all that could be required of him, and much more than had been expected. It was not supposed that with a force so small as his he could possibly occasion any interruption or delay in the progress of an

army such as that led by Rawdon; and he had most effectually performed those duties along the Congaree which had been done by Sumter and Marion on the waters of the Santee below. Every messenger between Rawdon and Ninety-Six had been cut off; and, while the urgent entreaties of Cruger, having command of the latter garrison, had failed in most cases to reach the ears of Rawdon, the despatches of the latter, promising assistance, and urging the former to hold out, had been invariably intercepted. Nor were the performances of the gallant young partisan limited to these small duties only. He had, in concert with Colonel Butler, a famous name among the whigs of Ninety-Six, given a terrible chastisement to the sanguinary tory, Cunningham, in which the troop of the latter was utterly annihilated, and their leader owed his escape only to the fleetness of an inimitable steed. But these events belong not to our story.

With a sad heart, but no diminution of enterprise or spirit, Colonel Conway took up the line of march for the Saluda, with the purpose of joining General Greene before Ninety-Six; or, in the event of that place being already in possession of the Americans, of extending his march toward the mountains, where General Pickens was about to operate against the Cherokee Indians.

But though compelled to this course by the pressure of the British army in his rear, his progress was not a flight. His little band was so compact, and so well acquainted with the face of the country, that he could move at leisure in front of the enemy, and avail himself of every opportunity for cutting off stragglers, defeating the operations of foraging parties, and baffling every purpose or movement of the British, which was not covered by a detachment superior to his own. Such was his purpose, and such, to a certain extent, were his performances.

But Conway was soon made sensible of the inefficiency of his force to contend even with the inferior cavalry of the enemy. These were only inferior in quality. In point of numbers they were vastly superior to the Americans. The measures which Rawdon had taken to mount the loyalists in his army, had, to the great surprise of the Americans, given him a superiority in

this particular, which was equally injurious to their hopes and unexpected by their apprehensions. The march of the British, though urged forward with due diligence by their stern commander, was, at the same time, distinguished by such a degree of caution as effectually to discourage Conway in his attempts upon it. The onslaught of the previous night justified the prudence of this wary general. The audacity of the Americans was, at this period, everywhere felt and acknowledged, and by none more readily than Rawdon. His advanced guard was sent forward in treble force: his provincial riflemen skirted the woods on the roadside while his main army defiled between, and his cavalry scoured the neighboring thickets wherever it was possible for them to hide a foe. Conway was compelled to console himself with the profitless compliment which this vigilance paid to his spirit and address; and, after hovering for the best part of a day's march around the path of the advancing enemy, without an opportunity to inflict a blow, he reluctantly pressed forward with increased speed for Ninety-Six, to prepare General Greene for the coming of the new enemy. Our course is thither also.

The post of Ninety-Six was situated on the crown of a gentle but commanding eminence, and included within its limits the village of the same name. This name was that of the county, or district, of which it was the county-town. Its derivation is doubtful; but most probably it came from its being ninety-six miles from Prince George, at the period of its erection the frontier post of the colony. Its history is one of great local interest. Originally a mere stockade for the defence of the settlers against Indian incursion, it at length became the scene of the first conflicts in the southern country, and perhaps in the revolutionary war. It was here that, early in 1775, the fierce domestic strife first began between the whigs and tories of this region;—a region beautiful and rich by nature, and made valuable by art, which, before the war was ended, was turned into something worse than a howling wilderness. The old stockade remained at the beginning of the Revolution, and when the British overran the state, they garrisoned the place, and it became one of the most valuable of that cordon of posts which they established

around and within it. Its protection and security were of the last importance to their interests. It enabled them to maintain a communication with the Cherokees and other Indians; and to keep in check the whig settlements on the west of it, while it protected those of the loyalists, north, south, and east. The most advanced post which they occupied, its position served to strengthen their influence in Camden and Augusta, and assisted them to overawe the population of Georgia and North Carolina. It was also, for a long period, the chief depôt of recruits; and drew, but too successfully, the disaffected youth of the neighborhood into the royal embrace.

The defences of this place had been greatly strengthened on the advance of the American army. Colonel Cruger, an American loyalist, who was intrusted with the command, was an officer of energy and talents, and proved himself equally adequate and faithful to the trust which was reposed in him. Calling in the aid of the neighboring slaves, he soon completed a ditch around his stockade, throwing the earth parapet height upon it, and securing it within, by culverts and traverses, to facilitate the communication in safety between his various points of defence. His ditch was further secured by an abattis; and, at convenient distances within the stockade, he erected strong block-houses of logs.

But the central and most important point in his position, lay in a work of considerable strength—which the curious in antiquarian research and history may see to this day in a state of comparative perfectness—called the “Star Battery.” It stood on the southeast of the village which it effectually commanded, was in shape of a star, having sixteen salient and returning angles, and communicated by lines with the stockade. In this were served three pieces of artillery, which, for more ready transition to any point of danger, were worked on wheel carriages.

On the north side of the village arises a copious fountain, of several eyes, which flows through a valley. From this rivulet the garrison obtained its supplies of water. The county prison, lying contiguous to this valley and commanding it, was also fortified; as was another stockade fort, lying on the opposite side of

the valley, of considerable strength, and having within it a couple of block-houses which assisted in covering the communication with the spring. A covert way led from the town to the rivulet; and the whole, including the village, was enclosed by lines of considerable extent and height. To defend his position, Cruger had a select force of six hundred men, many of them riflemen of the first quality, and not a few of them fighting, as they well knew, with halters about their necks.

Greene commenced the siege under very inauspicious circumstances, and with a force quite inadequate to his object. This siege formed one of the most animated and critical occurrences during the southern war, and had already lasted near a month, when Colonel Conway joined his little troop to the force of the commander-in-chief. The available army of Greene scarcely exceeded that of Cruger. He had no battering cannon; and there was no mode of succeeding against this "Star" redoubt, which was the chief point of defence, but in getting over or under it. Both modes were resolved upon. Regular approaches were made, and, on the completion of the first parallel, a mine was begun under cover of a battery erected on the enemy's right.

This work was prosecuted day and night. No interval was permitted. One party labored, while a second slept, and a third guarded both. The sallies of the besieged were constant and desperate; not a night passed without the loss of life on both sides; but the work of the Americans steadily advanced. The second parallel was at length completed, the enemy summoned to surrender, and a defiance returned to the demand. The third parallel was then begun, and its completion greatly facilitated by the invention of a temporary structure of logs, which, from the inventor's name, were called the "Maham towers." These were, in fact, nothing more than block-houses, constructed of heavy timbers, raised to a height superior to that of the beleaguered fort, and filled with riflemen. These sharpshooters succeeded, in a little time, in driving the artillerists of the garrison from their guns. Hot shot were tried to destroy the towers, but the greenness of the wood, in June, rendered the effort unavailing. The artillery of the "Star" could no longer be used by daylight, and by night it was little to be dreaded.

The garrison was now greatly straitened. Their provisions were fast failing them; they could no longer venture for water to the rivulet. Women were employed for this purpose by daylight, and men in women's clothing; and by night they received their supplies with the help of naked negroes. Other means were found for conveyance. Burning arrows were shot into the fort, but Cruger promptly threw off the roofs of his houses. An attempt was made to destroy the abattis by fire, but drew down death on every one of the daring fellows who attempted it. Beside the "Maham towers," one of which was within thirty yards of the enemy's ditch, the besiegers had erected several batteries for cannon. One of these, twenty feet in height, and within one hundred and forty yards of the "Star," so completely commanded it, that it became necessary to give its parapet an increased elevation. Bags of sand were employed for this purpose. Through these, apertures were left for the use of small-arms; and the removal of the sand-bags by night, gave room for the use of the artillery. Bloody and deadly was the strife that ensued for ten days, between the combatants. During this period not a man could show himself, on either side, without receiving a shot. As the conflict approached its termination it seemed to acquire increased rancor; and an equal desperation, under different motives, appeared to govern both parties.

This could not be sustained long; and the fall of the garrison was at hand. Cruger still held out in the hope of succor, for which he had long implored his commander. He had sufficient reasons, apart from the natural courage which the good soldier may possess, for making him defend his post to the very last extremity. There were those within its walls to whom no indulgence would have been extended by its captors—men whose odious crimes and bloody deeds had long since forfeited the security even of those laws which are allowed to temper with mercy the brutalities of battle. But their apprehensions, and the resolution of Cruger, could not long supply the deficiencies under which the besieged were suffering. Only two days more were allotted them for the retention of a post which they had so gallantly defended. But these two days were of the last im-

portance for good or evil to the two parties. In this period the American commander was apprized of the circumstances which rendered it necessary that the place should be carried by assault or the siege raised. The arrival of Conway announced the approach of Rawdon, and the same night furnished the same important intelligence to Cruger. But for this intelligence that very night must have witnessed the surrender of the post.

The circumspection and close watch which had been maintained so long and so well by the American general and his able subordinates, and which had kept the garrison in utter ignorance of the march of Rawdon from Charleston, was defeated at the last and most important moment from a quarter which had excited no suspicions. The circumstance has in it no small portion of romance. A young lady, said to be beautiful, and certainly bold—the daughter of one tried patriot and the sister of another—had formed in secret a matrimonial connection with a British officer, who was one of the besieged. Her residence was in the neighborhood, and she was countenanced, in visiting the camp with a flag, on some pretence of little moment. She was received with civility and dined at the general's table. Permitted the freedom of the encampment, she was probably distinguished by her lover from the redoubt, and contrived to convey by signs the desire which she entertained to make some communication to the besieged. The ardor of the lover and the soldier united to infuse a degree of audacity into his bosom, which prompted him to an act of daring equally bold and successful. He acknowledged her signal, darted from the redoubt, received her verbal communication, and returned in safety amidst a shower of bullets from the baffled and astonished sentinels. Such is the story told by tradition. It differs little from that which history relates, and in no substantial particular; what is obscure in the tale, but increases what is romantic. The *feu de joie* of the besieged and their loud huzzas apprized the American general of their new hopes; and too plainly assured him that his labor was taken in vain.

Colonel Conway was admitted that night to the tent of the general, where a council of war was to be held as to the course now to be pursued. Greene necessarily presided. Unmoved

by disappointment, unembarrassed by the probable defeat of his hopes and purposes, this cheerful and brave soldier looked around him with a smile of good humor upon his military family while he solicited their several opinions. His fine manly face, bronzed by the fierce glances of the southern suu, and heightened by an eye of equal spirit and benevolence, wore none of that dark disquietude and sullen ferocity, the sure token of vindictive and bad feelings, which scowled in the whole visage of his able opponent, Rawdon. A slight obliquity of vision, the result of small-pox in his youth, did not impair the sweetness of his glance, though it was sufficiently obvious in the eye which it affected. Conway had seen him more than once before, but never to so much advantage as now, when a defeat so serious as that which threatened his hopes, and rendered necessary the measure of consultation then in hand. He looked for the signs of peevishness and vexation but he saw none. Something of anxiety may have clouded the brow of the commander but such an expression only serves to ennoble the countenance of the man whose pursuits are elevated and whose performances are worthy. Anxiety makes the human countenance only the more thoroughly and sacredly human. It is the sign of care, and thought, and labor, and hope—of all the moral attributes which betoken the mind at work, and most usually at its legitimate employments.

On the right hand of Greene sat one who divided between himself and the commander-in-chief the attention of the ardent young partisan. This was the celebrated polish patriot Kosciuzko. He had served throughout the siege as chief engineer, and, under his guidance, the several approaches had been made. His tall, erect, military form, pale, thin and melancholy features, light brown hair, already thinned above his lofty brow, together with the soft blue eye which lightened them up at moments with almost girlish animation, seemed to the mind of Conway inexpressibly touching. The fate and name of Kosciuzko were so intimately connected with those of his country, that the eye of the spectator beheld the miseries of Poland in the sad features of its melancholy exile. His words, few, and sweetened as it were by the imperfect English in which they were

expressed, riveted the attention of all, and were considered with marked deference by the commander, to whom they were addressed.

There were many other brave men at that council-board, some of whom Clarence Conway now beheld for the first time, whose deeds and reputation had reached his ears, and whose persons he now examined with momentarily-growing interest.

There was Lee of the legion, whom Greene emphatically styled the eye and wing of his army; Campbell of the Virginians, who subsequently fell at the Eutaw, while bravely leading on his command; Kirkwood of the Delawares, happily designated as the continental Diomed, a soldier of delightful daring; Howard of the Marylanders; Rudolph of the legion, Armstrong, and Benson, and others, whose presence would enlighten any council-board, as their valor had done honor to every field in which they fought. Our hero had enough to do, after conveying to the council all his intelligence, to note and study the features of his associates—to weigh the words which they uttered—and to endeavor, for himself, to judge in what degree they severally deserved the high reputations which they bore. He was not disposed or prepared, perhaps, to offer any suggestions himself. He was better pleased to study and to listen.

The consultation was brief. The points to be discussed were few.

“You perceive, gentlemen,” said Greene, opening the proceedings, “that our toils appear to have been all taken in vain. Apprized of Lord Rawdon’s approach, the garrison will now hold out until the junction is effected, and for that we can not wait; we are in no condition to meet Lord Rawdon single-handed. Colonel Conway, whose exertions merit my warmest acknowledgments, represents his force as quite too formidable for anything that we can oppose to him. He brings with him three fresh regiments from Ireland, the remains of the regiment of Boze, near six hundred loyalists whom he has mounted as cavalry, besides Coffin’s dragoons—in all, an army little short of three thousand men. To this we can oppose scarce eight hundred in camp and fit for duty; Marion and Sumter are too far, and too busy below, to leave me any hope of their co-opera

tion before Rawdon comes within striking distance; and the presence of his lordship in such force will bring out Cunningham and Harrison, with all their loyalists, who will give sufficient employment for Pickens and Washington above. Retreat becomes absolutely necessary; but shall our labors here for the last month be thrown away? Shall we give up 'Ninety-Six' without a struggle? Shall we not make the effort to win the post, and behind its walls prepare for the reception of Rawdon?"

The unanimous opinion of the council tallied with the wishes of the commander. The assault was resolved upon. The necessary orders were given out that night, and the army was all in readiness on the morning of the 18th of June to make the final attempt. The forlorn hope was led, on the American left, against the 'Star' battery, by Lieutenants Seldon and Duval. Close behind them followed a party furnished with hooks fastened to staves, whose particular duty it was to pull down the sand-bags which the enemy had raised upon their parapet. Colonel Campbell next advanced to the assault at the head of the first Maryland and Virginian regiments. These all marched under cover of the approaches, until they came within a few yards of the enemy's ditch. Major Rudolph commanded the forlorn hope on the American right against the stockade, supported by the legion infantry, and Kirkwood's Delawares. The forts, the rifle-towers, and all the American works, were manned and prepared to sweep the enemy's parapet, previous to the advance of the storming party. Duval and Seldon were to clear the abattis and occupy the opposite curtain, then, driving off the enemy, were to open the way for the workmen. The sand-bags pulled down, Campbell was to make the attack, availing himself of their aid in clambering up the parapet. To Colonel Lee was left the assault upon the stockades, of which, when obtained, he was simply to keep possession and wait events.

A discharge of artillery at noon was the signal for the assault, which was followed by the prompt movement of the storming parties. An uninterrupted blaze of artillery and small-arms covered the advance of the forlorn hope; and, enveloped in its

shadowing snokes, this gallant little band leaped the ditch and commenced the work of destruction.

But the besieged who had so bravely and for so long a time defended their ramparts, and whom the approach of Lord Rawdon had inspired with fresh confidence and courage, was prepared for their reception. They met the attack with equal coolness and determination. The assailants were encountered by bristling bayonets and levelled pikes, which lined the parapet, while a stream of fire, poured forth from intervals between the sand-bags, was productive of dreadful havoc among them. The form of the redoubt gave to the besieged complete command over the ditch, and subjected the besiegers to a cross-fire, which the gradual removal of the abattis only tended to increase.

For the details of this action, the reader will look to other histories. Enough if, in dealing with this (to us) purely episodic matter, we give the result. The attempt was desperate; but so was the hope. The Americans fought well, but on the most unfortunate terms of combat. This is not the place to criticise the transaction; but, some day, the military critic will find it instructive to review this, among other great actions of our Revolutionary war, and will be able to point out clearly the miserable mistakes, the result of equal ignorance and imbecility, by which the native valor of the people was continually set at naught. There were mistakes enough in this siege and assault of 'Ninety-Six,' to decide the latter before it was begun. Enough now, that the day was lost, almost as soon as begun. The hope of the assailants, small at the beginning, was very soon utterly dissipated; and mortified and pained, less at being baffled than at the loss of so many brave men, Greene gave the orders which discontinued the assault.

Yet, for near three quarters of an hour, did these brave fellows persist, notwithstanding the fall of two thirds of their number and both their leaders. This daring and enduring courage enabled them to occupy the curtain, and maintain, hand to hand, the conflict with the garrison. They yielded at length, rather to the summons of their commander than to their own fear of danger. The greater part of their men were killed or wounded;

but the latter were brought off amid the hottest fire of the garrison.

The misfortunes of Greene did not end here. The British general was at hand, and, the dead being buried, the American commander struck his tents, and commenced the retreat which carried Clarence Conway still further from a region in which all his feelings and anxieties were now deeply and doubly interested. We will not attempt to pursue his flight, but, retracing our steps in a quarter to which he dare not turn, we will resume our march along with that of the British army, when they left the Middleton barony to advance upon Ninety-Six.

But, in going back to Brier Park, it is not our purpose at this time to trespass again upon its inmates. We shall simply join company with our ancient friend, John Bannister, and trace his progress, as a prisoner, in the train of his captors.

Watson Gray—having been intrusted by Lord Rawdon with the exclusive disposition of this business, in consequence of the suggestions which the latter had made him the night before—had very naturally assigned the custody of the scout to the Black Riders, of whom, under a roving commission, Gray ranked as an inferior officer. He had every reason for believing the charge to be a secure one. Bannister had long been an object of dislike and apprehension to this troop, as he had on several occasions discovered their most secret haunts, and beaten up their quarters. His skill in the woods was proverbial, and dreaded by all his enemies accordingly; and the recent display which he had made in the case of Gray himself, of that readiness of resource which had rendered him famous, was very well calculated to mortify the latter, and make him desirous of subjecting his own captor to all the annoyance likely to follow captivity.

Whatever may have been the motives by which he was governed in this proceeding, it was very evident that Supple Jack could not have been put into less indulgent custody. But circumstances baffle the wisest, in spite of all precautions; and events which are utterly beyond human foresight suddenly arise to confound all the calculations of the cunning. John Bannister found a friend among the Black Riders when he little expected

one. When the army came to a halt that night, which was not till a tolerably late hour, their camp was made on the northern side of the Little Saluda, just within the line of the present district of Edgefield; a commanding spot was chosen for the bivouac, and every precaution taken to secure it from disturbance for the night.

The preparations for supper produced the customary stir and excitement for a while; but the supper itself was soon discussed. Excessive fatigue had lessened appetite, and sleep was alone desirable to the regiments, which had been pressed forward to the utmost of their marching powers, from the very first moment of their leaving Charleston. The intense heat of the climate, at that season, made this task an inappreciably severe one. The duties of the cavalry had been, if possible, still more severe than those of the infantry; compelled, as they constantly were, to make continual and large circuits through the country, around the line of march of the army, in order to defeat the perpetual ambuscades of the Americans, who, in small parties, hovered about the march, and made frequent dashes, which were almost as successful as frequent, whenever opportunity, or remissness of the enemy, seemed to invite adventure. For the first time, for a long period, the circumstances of the campaign seemed to promise impunity to the encampment; and, with a pleasant feeling of relief, the British troops prepared to make the most of their securities. Rest, repose, sleep—these were now the only objects of desire; and the several groups crouched about beneath the forest-trees, without much pause or choice, sinking down simply in the shade, upon the dry leaves, with cloak or blanket wrapped about them.

The Black Riders were stationed beside a grove which skirted one of the forks of the little Saluda, and were not the last to avail themselves of the general privilege of sleep. A few trees sufficed to cover their entire troop, and they clustered together in several small bodies, the horses of each group being fastened to swinging limbs of trees close to those which sheltered their riders, in order that they might be ready at hand in any sudden emergency.

In the centre of one of these squads lay John Bannister. He

was bound hand and foot; the bandages upon the latter members being only put on for sleeping purposes, to be withdrawn when the march was resumed. A few rods distant, paced a sturdy sentinel, to whom the double duty was entrusted of keeping equal watch upon the horses and the prisoner. With this exception, Bannister was almost the only person whose eyes were unsealed by slumber in the encampment of the dragoons. He was wakeful through anxiety and thought; for, though one of the most cheerful and elastic creatures breathing, he had too many subjects of serious apprehension, to suffer him to enjoy that repose which his body absolutely needed. There was yet another reason to keep him wakeful. He was very far from being resigned to his fate. He had no taste for the condition of the prisoner; and the moment that found him a captive found him meditating schemes for his own deliverance. His plans had reference to himself entirely. He was one of those self dependent people, who never care to look abroad for those resources which may be found within; and, closing his eyes where he lay, and affecting the sleep which he could not obtain, he wearied himself with the examination of a hundred different plans for escaping from his predicament.

While he lay in this position he heard some one approach and speak to the sentinel. A brief dialogue ensued between them, carried on in terms quite too low to be distinguished by him; but the tones of the stranger's voice seemed familiar to the ear of the listener. Bannister opened his eyes and discerned the two persons; but, in consequence of the umbrage of the trees between, he could only see their lower limbs; after a while one of them disappeared, and fancying that it was the stranger, and that the sentinel would again resume his duties, the prisoner again shut his eyes and tried to resume the train of meditation which the intrusion had disturbed. He had not long been thus engaged when he was startled by the low accents of some one speaking behind the trunk of the tree against which his head was leaned, and addressing him by name.

"Who speaks?" he demanded, in the same whispering tones in which he had been addressed

"A friend."

“Who?”

“Muggs.”

“What, Isaac?”

“The same.”

“Ah, you varmint! after I converted you, you’ll still follow the British.”

“Hush!” whispered the other, with some trepidation in his tones. “For God’s sake, not so loud. Stockton and Darcy and two more are jest under the oaks to the left, and I’m jub’ous they’re half awake now.”

“But how come you here, Muggs?”

“Why, nateral enough. I hearn the army was on its march, and I reckoned there was guineas to be got by way in exchange for rum and sugar; so I hitched horse and wagon together, and turned sutler for the troop as I used to; and mighty glad are they to see me; and mighty glad I am to see you, Jack Bannister, and to try and give you a help out of your hitch.”

“I’m jub’ous of you, Isaac Muggs. I’m afeard you ain’t had a full couvansion.”

“Don’t you be afeard. Trust to me.”

“How? Trust to you for what? Will you loose me—git me a horse and a broadsword—hey? Can you do this for the good cause, Isaac, and prove your convarsion?”

“Don’t talk, but turn on your side a leetle, so that I can feel where your hands are tied. Be quick—I hain’t much time to spare. Ben Geiger, who is your sentry, is gone to my wagon to get a drink, and will be back pretty soon, and I’m keeping watch for him, and a mighty good watch I’ll keep.”

“There—cut, Muggs, and let me git up; but you must cut the legs loose too. They’ve hitched me under and over, as ef I was a whole team by myself.”

“And so you are, John Bannister; but you mustn’t git up when I cut you loose.”

“Thunder! and why not, Muggs? What’s the use of loosing foot and fingers, if one’s not to use them?”

“Not jest yet; because that’ll be getting Ben Geiger into a scrape, and me at the back of it. You must wait till he’s changed for another sentry, and till I gives the signal. I’ll

whistle for you the old boat-horn tune that's carried you many a long night along the Congaree—you remember? Well, when you hear that you may know that the sentry's changed. Then watch the time, and when the t'other sentinel draws off toward the horses, you can crawl through them gum-bushes on all fours and git into the bay. As for the horse, I'm jub'ous there's no getting one easy. They'll make too much trampling. But I'll meet you on t'other side of the bay, and bring you a pistol, or sword, or whatever I can find."

"Well, well! You bring the sword and pistol. It'll be mighty hard, where there's so many, if I can't find the nag myself."

"Work your hands," said the landlord.

"They're free! they're free!" was the exulting response of the scout, almost too loudly expressed for prudence.

"Hush, for God's sake! and don't halloo until you're out of the bush. Take the knife now in your own hands, and cut loose your feet. But you must lie quiet, and let the ropes rest jest where they are. Make b'lieve you're asleep till you hear my whistle, and then crawl off as if you were all belly, and wriggle away as quiet as a blacksnake. I must leave you now. It's a'most time for Ben Geiger to get back."

The scout did not await a second suggestion to apply the keen edge of the hunter's knife, which the landlord furnished him, to the cords which fastened his feet. These he drew up repeatedly with the satisfaction of one who is pleased to exercise and enjoy the unexpected liberty which he receives; but the suggestions of the landlord, which were certainly those of common sense, warned him to limit these exercises, and restrain his impatient members, till the time should arrive for using them with advantage. He accordingly composed himself and them, in such a manner as to preserve the appearance of restraint; arranged the perfect portions of the ropes above his ankles, and tucked in the several ends between and below. Then, passing his hands behind him, as before, he lay on his back outstretched with all the commendable patience of a stoic philosopher awaiting the operations of that fate with which he holds it folly if not impertinence to interfere.

The landlord, meanwhile, had resumed the duties of the sentinel, and was pacing the measured ground with the regularity of a veteran, and the firm step of one who is conscious of no failure of duty. The scout's eyes naturally turned upon him with an expression of greatly increased regard.

"Well," said he, in a mental soliloquy, "I was half jub'ous I'd have to lick Muggs over agin, before he could be brought to a reasonable way of thinking. I was mightily afeard that he only had half an onderstanding of the truth when I gin him that hoist on the Wateree; but it's a God's providence that orders all things, in his blessed mercy, for the best, and lets one licking answer for a stont man's convarasion. I'm jub'ous, if Muggs hadn't ha' lost one arm in the wars, if he would have onderstood the liberties we're fighting for half so easily. Liberty's a difficult thing to be onderstood at first. It takes mighty hard knocks and a heap of thinking, to make it stand out cl'ar in the daylight; and then it's never half so cl'ar, or half so sweet, as when here's some danger that we're going to lose it for ever, for good and all. If ever I wanted to teach a friend of mine how to believe in the reason of liberty, I'd jis lock him up in a good strong jail for three months, or mou't be six, put on a hitch of plough-line on hands and legs, and then argy with him to show that God made a mighty great mistake when he gin a man a pair of feet and a pair of hands, when he might see for himself that he could sleep in the stumps at both ends and never feel the want of 'em. But there comes Ben Geiger, I suppose, and I must lie as if my legs were stumps only. Lord! I'll show 'em another sort of argyment as soon as Isaac gives that old Congaree whistle. It's only some twenty steps to the wood, and I reckon it can't be much more to the bay, for the airth looks as if it wanted to sink mighty sudden. These chaps round me snort very loud—that's a sign, I've always hearn, of sound sleeping. I don't much mind the resk of getting off to the bay; but I'm getting too fat about the ribs to walk a long way in this hot weather. Noise or no noise, I must pick out one of them nags for the journey. Let 'em snort. I don't much mind pistol-bullets when they fly by night at a running horseman. They're like them that shoot 'em. They make a great bellowing, but

they can't see. Let 'em snort; but ef I work my own legs this night, it'll be to pick out the best nag in that gang, and use him by way of preference."

Time moved very slowly, in the estimation of the anxious scout. Ben Geiger, the sentry, had resumed his watch and walk. Muggs had disappeared, and solemn was the silence that once more prevailed over the encampment. Two full hours had elapsed since the limbs of Bannister had been unloosed, and still he waited for the signal which was to apprize him that the moment for their use was at hand. But it came out at last, the long wailing note, such as soothes the heart with sweet melancholy, untwisted from the core of the long rude wooden bugle of the Congaree boatman, as he winds his way upon the waters of that rapid rushing river. The drowsy relief-guard soon followed, and Ben Geiger disappeared to enjoy that luxury of sleep from which his successor was scarcely yet entirely free. He rubbed his eyes and yawned audibly while moving to and fro with unsteady step along the beaten limits of his round. His drowsy appearance gave increased encouragement to the woodsman. But even this was not necessary to impart confidence to so cool a temper, so cheerful a spirit, and so adroit a scout. The sentry had looked upon the prisoner and the horses in the presence of the guard when Geiger was relieved. Satisfied that all was safe, he had started upon his march; and, giving sufficient time to the guard to resume their own slumbers, Jack Bannister now prepared himself for his movement.

This event, which would have been of great importance, and perhaps of trying danger to most persons in his situation, was really of little consequence in his eyes. With the release of his hands and feet he regarded the great difficulty as fully at an end. The risk of pistol-shot, as we have seen from his soliloquy, he considered a very small one. Besides, it was a risk of the war in which he was engaged, and one which he had incurred a hundred times before. On foot, he well knew that he could surpass the best runner of the Indian tribes, and once in the thick bay which was contiguous, he could easily conceal himself beyond the apprehension of cavalry. If he had any anxiety at all, it was on the subject of choosing a horse from

the cluster that were attached to the swinging limbs of the adjacent oaks. He felt that, with the opportunity before him, and with choice allowed, it was incumbent upon him to choose with reference to his reputation no less than to his escape. To choose an inferior brute, having the pick of the best, would have argued greatly against the understanding of the scout, and would have filled his soul with a bitter sense of mortification. But hear him, as he deliberates, and you will be satisfied that he is not the person to throw away a good chance, and disregard the value of a proper choice.

“There’s a dark bay, I’m thinking, that, as well as I can make out in the moonlight, is about the best. The black is a monstrous stout animal, but too high and heavy for the sand roads. The gray is a little too showy for a scout that ought to love the shade better than the sunshine. I reckon I’ll resk the bay. He ain’t too heavy, and he ain’t too low. He has legs enough for his body, and his body looks well on his legs. He’ll *do*, and if I could only take the saddle from the black and clap it on the bay, I’d be a made horseman. It’s a prime English saddle, and I reckon the holsters don’t want for filling. It’s mighty tempting, but——”

A favorable opportunity for making a movement now suggesting itself, his soliloquy was cut short. The scout had his eyes all around him. The sentinel’s back was toward him, and he commenced his progress. To the citizen, uninformed in the artifices of Indian warfare, the mode of operations adopted and pursued by our scout, would have been one of curious contemplation and study. It is probable that such a person, though looking directly at the object, would have been slow to discern its movements, so sly, so unimposing, so shadowy as they were. With the flexibility of a snake the body of our scout seemed to slide away almost without the assistance of hands and feet. No obvious motion betrayed his progress, not the slightest rustling in the grass, nor the faintest crumpling of the withered leaf of the previous autumn. His escape was favored by the gray garments which he wore, which mixed readily with the misty shadows of the night and forest. Amid their curtaining umbrage it was now impossible for the sentinel to perceive him

while pursuing his rounds; and, aware of this, he paused behind one of the trees on the edge of the encampment, and gently elevating his head, surveyed the path which he had traversed. He could still distinguish the sounds of sleep from several groups of his enemies. The moonlight was glinted back from more than one steel cap and morion, which betrayed the proximity of the Black Riders. There lay Stockton, and Darcy, and the rest of that fearful band whose pathway had been traced in blood along the Congaree and Saluda. More than one of the associates of the scout had fallen by their felon hands. Well might Jack Bannister grind his teeth together as he surveyed them. How easy, with their own broadswords, to make his way, even at little hazard to himself, over severed necks and shoulders spouting with their gore.

The feeling was natural to the man, but for an instant only. Bannister dismissed it with a shudder; and turning warily in another direction, he proceeded to put in execution his design of choosing the best horse from among the group, for the purpose of making his flight as agreeable to himself, and as costly to his enemies, as was possible. Circumstances seemed to favor him, but he never forewent his usual caution. He proceeded with sufficient gentleness, and produced no more disturbance among the animals than they habitually occasioned among themselves. His closer examination into their respective qualities confirmed the judgment which he had previously formed while watching them from a distance. The dark bay was the steed that promised best service, and he succeeded with little difficulty in detaching him from the bough to which he was fastened.

To bring him forth from the group, so as to throw the rest between himself and the sentinel's line of sight, was a task not much more difficult; and but little more was necessary to enable our adventurous scout to lead him down the hillside into the recesses of the bay, in the shade of which he could mount him without exposure, and dart off with every probability of easy escape.

But courage and confidence are very apt to produce audacity in the conduct of a man of much experience; and our scout yearned for the fine English saddle and holsters which were

carried by the black. Dropping the bridle of his bay, therefore, over a slender hickory shoot, he stole back to the group, and proceeded to strip the black of his appendages. But, whether the animal had some suspicions that all was not right in this nocturnal proceeding, or was indignant at the preference which the scout had given in favor of his companion over himself, it is certain that he resented the liberties taken by the intruder in a manner that threatened to be more fatal to the fugitive than all the pistols of the encampment. He proceeded by kicking and biting to prove his jealousy and dislike, and this so effectually, as to make it a somewhat difficult matter for the scout to effect his extrication from the group, all of whom were more or less restiff, and prepared to retort upon the black the sundry assaults which, in his random fury, he had inflicted upon them.

This led to a commotion which attracted the attention of the sentinel; and his challenge, and evident approach, compelled Bannister to discard his caution and betake himself with all expedition to the steed which he had captured. He darted forward accordingly, and the sharp bang of the pistol followed his appearance on the back of the steed. This, though it awakened only the merriment of the fugitive, aroused the whole encampment. There was no time for contemplation;—none for the expected conference with the landlord. Bannister knew this. He cast an instinctive glance to the northern heavens, as if seeking for their guiding star, then pricking his steed with the point of his knife, dashed away with a hurry-scurry through the woods that defied their intricacies, and seemed to laugh at the vain shouts and clamor of the Black Riders, who were seeking to subdue to order, with the view to pursuit, their now unmanageable horses.

The circumstance that had led to the discovery of Bannister's flight, availed somewhat to diminish the dangers of the chase. Before the refractory steeds could be quieted, and the dragoons on the track of his flight, the tread of his horse's heels was lost entirely to their hearing. They scattered themselves, nevertheless, among the woods, but were soon recalled from a pursuit which promised to be fruitless; while Bannister, drawing up his steed when he no longer heard the clamors of his pursuers

coolly paused for a while to deliberate upon the circumstances of his situation. But a few moments seemed necessary to arrive at a resolution, and, once more tickling his horse's flanks with the point of his knife, he buried himself from sight in the deepest recesses of the forest.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SHADOWS AND STRAWS UPON THE SURFACE.

THE excitement at the Middleton barony was succeeded by something of a calm; but not its usual calm. It had now other tenants than those whose quality and sex had maintained its peace along with its purity. The chief of the outlaws, attended closely by his faithful adherent, Watson Gray, was still its inmate; and there was yet another stranger, in the person of a nice, dapper surgeon's assistant, to whom Rawdon had given the wounded man in charge. This young gentleman was named Hillhouse. He was clever enough in his profession. He could take off a leg in the twinkling of an eye; but he was one of that unfortunate class of smart young persons who aim at universal cleverness. There was no object too high for his ambition, and, unhappily, none too low. He philosophized when philosophy was on the tapis, and

"Hear him but reason in divinity,"

you would have fancied the British camp was the very house of God, and the assistant surgeon the very happiest exponent of the designs of Providence. He talked poetry by the canto, and felicitated himself on the equal taste with which he enjoyed Butler and Cowley—the antipodes of English poets. But, perhaps, his happiest achievement was in the threading of a needle; and to see him in this performance was productive of a degree of amusement, if not real pleasure, which could neither be described easily nor well estimated. His adroitness was truly wonderful. Armed with the sharpened thread in one hand, and

the needle in the other—his lips working the while with singular indefatigableness—his left foot firmly planted in the foreground, his right thrown back, and poised upon the toe;—and he laughed to scorn the difficulty which the doubtful eye of the needle seemed to offer to his own. His genius, though universal, lay eminently this way. He had the most marvellous nicety of finger in threading needles that ever was possessed by mortal. Unhappily, he was not satisfied with a distinction so notable. He was a universal genius, and aimed at all sorts of distinction. He would discourse of war, and manœuvre armies, so as to confound Hannibal and circumvent Scipio; and, while insisting upon his paramount excellence as a surgeon, was yet perpetually deploring that sacrifice of his better uses and endowments, which the profession required him to make. Convention had done something toward other developments and desires of our subject. He was a gallant, no less than a genius—was ambitious of the reputation of a *roué*, and, according to his own account, had achieved some of the most wonderful conquests among the sex, in spite of the most eminent rivals. His complaisance was prodigious, in respect to the tender gender; and when he considered how hopeless it was, in one man, to attempt to render all happy, he deplored the fate which had made him irresistible, and regretted that but a single life was allowed to execute all the desires even of universal genius. How he pitied the fair, frail creatures who were compelled to hunger hopelessly. He would willingly have had himself cut up in little for their sakes, could the ubiquitous attributes of his mind have availed for the several subdivisions of his body; but, as this could not well be done, he could only sigh for their privations.

Fancy, with such complaisance, the person of the ugliest "Greathead" in existence—a man, with a short neck, head round as a bullet, eyes like goggles, and a nose as sharp as a penknife; a mouth which could hold a pippin, and was constantly on the stretch as if desiring one. Fancy, yet farther, such a person in the house with a woman like Flora Middleton, smirking indulgently upon that damsel, and readily mistaking the cool contempt with which she regarded him, as only a natural expression of that wonder which his presence must naturally

inspire in a country-girl—and it will not be difficult to anticipate some of the scenes which took place between them whenever it was the fortune of the gallant to be thrown into company with the maiden.

Mr. Hillhouse was too provident of time in all matters, to suffer any of his talents to remain unemployed, when he could arrange it otherwise. Love-making was regarded as one of these. It was not with him a matter of passion or of sentiment. He had not a single sensibility at work. It was simply as an accomplishment, and as an exercise for his accomplishments, that he condescended to smile upon the fair, and to confer those affections which he otherwise affected to solicit. He himself had no affections—perhaps such a creature never has. He was deficient in that earnestness of character without which the sensibilities are forms rather than substances—the shows of things which only delude, and never satisfy the desires of the mind. He had scarcely seen Flora Middleton before he had planned her conquest. While examining the wounds of Morton, in connection with the head surgeon, he was turning over in his mind, and framing the words of that salutation which he was to address, on the first occasion, to the young lady. It was not many hours after Rawdon's departure, before he commenced his operations. The breakfast-table was the scene. Mrs. Middleton, whom the fatigues and alarms of the night had overcome, was not present; and, looking sad and unhappy, Flora took her seat at the coffee-board.

Mr. Watson Gray and Mr. Hillhouse appeared at the first summons, though the latter did not seem conscious that the room was blessed with any other presence than his own, and that other with whom he condescended to converse. Watson Gray, with sufficient good sense, smiled, took his seat, and said nothing beyond what was required of good breeding. But the surgeon had reached a period in life, when it seemed to him a duty to display himself, and satisfy his companions of his ability to bring out others. Rawdon had said to him, when designating him for the duty of taking care of Morton—"Now, don't make a fool of yourself, Hillhouse;" and Majoribanks, in his hearing, had commented on the counsel, by the remark—"It is almost the

only thing that he can not help doing." But neither speech served to restrain a vanity whose ebullitions were habitual; and the young surgeon began to prattle, as soon as the heiress made her appearance. The events of the night, the military movements of the dawn, and the beauty of the morn which succeeded, furnished him with ample topics. He was in hope that the "spirit-stirring drum and ear-piercing fife," and so forth, had not vexed too greatly the slumbers of Miss Middleton;—a wish that the young lady answered with a grave nod, and an assurance which her countenance belied, that she never felt better in all her life. The weather, the never-failing topic, enabled him to dilate copiously from the poets—Milton being the first at hand—with an almost literal description.

"A most lovely morning, Miss Middleton! In this beautiful country, you may be said to realize the truth of Milton's description of another region." Hemming thrice, to relieve himself from an obstruction in the throat which he did not feel, he proceeded, in a sort of chant, to give the beautiful address of Eve to Adam—beginning:—

"Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet
With charm of earliest birds," &c., &c.

But nothing could exceed the unction of his look and gesture, when, approaching the conclusion of the passage, he betrayed by his look, tone, and action, the true reason why the selection had been made, and the application which he sought to give to its closing sentence:—

'But neither breath of morn, when she ascends
With charm of earliest birds; nor rising sun,
On this delightful land; nor herb, tree, flower,
Glistening with dew; nor fragrance after showers;
Nor grateful evening mild; nor silent night
With this her solemn bird; nor walk by moon
Or glittering starlight, *without thee is sweet.*"

Women very soon discern when they have to deal with a fool. At another time, and under other circumstances, Flora might have amused herself with the harmless monster; but she forebore, and quietly replied:—

“In truth, sir, your selection is very appropriate. The description, at this season of the day and year, is very correct, when applied to our Congaree country. One would almost fancy that Milton had been thinking of us. At least, our self-complaisance may well take the liberty of applying his verses as we please. But, sir, do tell me how your patient is.”

This was all said with the most indifferent, matter-of-fact manner in the world. The answer to the inquiry was lost in the professional knowledge which enveloped it. A long, scientific jargon ensued, on the subject of wounds in general; then followed an analysis of the several kinds of wounds—gun-shot, rifle, sabre, pike, bayonet, bill, bludgeon—wounds in the head and the hip, the shoulder and the leg, the neck and the abdomen.

“But of all wounds, Miss Middleton, I feel at this moment more than ever convinced that the most fatal are those which are inflicted upon the human heart.”

This was followed by a glance of the most inimitable tenderness, while the hand of the speaker rested upon the region, the susceptibilities of which were alleged to be so paramount.

“Your opinion, sir,” said the young lady, with becoming gravity, “is confirmed by all that I ever heard on the subject. Indeed, sir, our overseer, who is an excellent judge in such matters, and who was at one time the only butcher in Charleston—prefers shooting a steer through the heart always, in preference to the head. He asserts that while death is certain to follow the hurt in the one region, it is a very frequent circumstance that the hardness of the other renders it impenetrable to the bullet, unless the aim be very good and the distance be very small. But you, sir, ought to be the best judge of the correctness of this opinion.”

Watson Gray made considerable effort to suppress the grin which rose in spite of himself to his visage. The scout perceived, in an instant, the latent sarcasm in the reply of the damsel; but the young surgeon was innocent of any unnecessary understanding, and as she kept her countenance with praiseworthy gravity, he was rather led to conclude that her simplicity was of a kind somewhat bordering on fatuity.

“Verily,” he thought to himself, “this is a mere rustic; she

has seen nothing of the world; lived always in a state of pure simplicity; totally unsophisticated. I shall have but little trouble with her."

With this reflection, he proceeded with great dignity to offer some objections to the opinion of the overseer, to all of which Flora Middleton assented with the air of one who is anxious to get rid of a wearisome person or subject.

But the surgeon was not to be shaken off so easily, and every question which she found it necessary to propose, however simple or little calculated to provoke dilation, only had the effect of bringing about the same results. The same jargon filled her ears—the same inflated style of compliment offended her taste; and, in answer to the third or fourth inquiry as to the condition of his patient, he assured her that "Wounds were either fatal or they were not. Death might follow the prick of a needle, while a man has been known to survive even a puncture of the heart itself;"—here followed another significant glance at the lady;—"but," he continued, with the air of a man who declares the law, "while there is life there is hope. Hope, as we are told by our little poet of Twickenham, 'hope springs eternal in the human breast;' and the last person, Miss Middleton, whom hope should ever desert, should be the surgeon. So many have been the marvellous cures which the art of man has effected, that he should despair of nothing. Nothing, you know, is impossible with Providence—perhaps, I should say, with art; for many have been its successes, which ignorance has falsely and foolishly attributed to miraculous interposition. Miracles, Miss Middleton, are not common things. I am of opinion, though I would not have you suppose me skeptical or irreligious, that a great many events are represented as miraculous which owe their occurrence to natural and ordinary laws. There was an instance—it came under my own observation in the island of Jamaica——"

"Pardon me, sir, if you please, but if your patient can longer spare your presence, mine can not. I am to understand you, then, as of opinion that Mr. Conway can only survive by what is ordinarily considered a miracle; but which, I am to believe, will be then wholly ascribable to your professional skill?"

"I reckon, Miss Middleton," said Watson Gray, rising from the table as he spoke, "that Mr. Conway stands a good chance of getting over it. He's got some ugly cuts, but he hasn't much fever, and I don't think any of the wounds touch the vital parts. I've seen a good many worse hurts in my time, and though I'm no doctor, yet I think he'll get over it by good nursing and watching."

Mr. Hillhouse was greatly confounded by this interposition. His eyebrows were elevated as Watson Gray went on, and he permitted himself to exhibit just sufficient interest in the interruption as to wheel his chair half round, and take a cool, contemptuous look at the speaker. The latter did not wait for reply or refutation; and the simple directness of what he said was sufficiently conclusive to Flora, who rose also, and—the gentlemen having finished breakfast—prepared to leave the room. But Mr. Hillhouse was not willing to suffer this movement. He had still more knowledge to display.

"Do not be deceived by this person, Miss Middleton—a very cool person, certainly, not wanting in presumption—a strange person; I should judge him to be the overseer of whom you have spoken."

"No, sir; I only know him as one of the friends of Mr. Conway."

"Ah! a friend of Mr. Conway—a very strange selection. There is nothing about which gentlemen should be so careful as the choice of friends. A friend is a man——"

"Excuse me, sir,—but may I beg your attention, at your earliest leisure, in the chamber of the young woman? Her delirium seems to be increasing."

"It will give me pleasure to obey your requisitions, Miss Middleton; but let me warn you against forming your judgment, upon the subject of Mr. Conway's condition, from the report of this person—this overseer of yours. I doubt not that he is an excellent butcher, Miss Middleton; but, surely it is obvious to you that the art of taking life, and that of saving it, are very different arts. Now, I suspect that he could tell very nearly, as well as myself, what degree of force it would be necessary to use in felling a bullock, but the question how to bring the same bullock to life again——"

“Is surely one that is better answered by yourself, and I should consult you, sir, were it ever necessary, in preference to everybody else.”

The surgeon bowed at the compliment, and with undiminished earnestness, and more directness than usual, returned to his subject, if subject he may be said to have who amalgamated all subjects so happily together.

“Mr. Conway, Miss Middleton, is not so bad as he might be, and is a great deal worse, I am disposed to think, than he wishes himself to be. His wounds are not deadly, though he may die of them; yet, though life itself be but a jest, I must consider them serious. This overseer of yours is right in some things; though, I suspect, he only reports my own remarks to Lord Rawdon, made this morning, ere his lordship took his departure. I told his lordship that I considered the case doubtful, as all maladies must be considered; for you know that there is no certainty in life, but death. He has fever, and that is unfavorable; but as he has little fever, that is favorable. In short, if he does not suffer a great change for the worse, I trust that he will get better. Nay, I may admit that I have hopes of it, though no certainties. The surgeon who speaks of certainties, in such matters, is—pardon me, Miss Middleton—little better than a fool.”

“I thank you, sir; you have really enlightened me on many subjects. I am very much obliged to you. You must have seen a great deal of the world, sir.”

This was said with an air of very great simplicity. It completely deceived the complacent surgeon.

“The world! Miss Middleton, I have sounded it everywhere. I have basked on the banks of the Niger; I have meditated at the foot of the pyramids; have taken my chibouque with a pacha, and eaten sandwiches with the queen of Hungary. I have travelled far, toiled much; spent five years in India, as many in the West Indies, two in South America; and yet, you see me here in South Carolina, still nothing more than second-surgeon to a little army of less than five thousand men, commanded by a general who—but no matter! Lord Rawdon is a good soldier, Miss Middleton—as the world goes—but, burn me! a very poor judge of good associates.”

“You must have left your maternal ties at a very early period, to have travelled so far, and seen so much.”

“Apron strings” softened into “maternal ties,” did not offend the surgeon’s sensibilities.

“A mere boy, Miss Middleton; but it is surprising how rapidly a person acquires knowledge, who starts early in pursuit of it. Besides, travelling itself is a delight—a great delight—it would do you good to travel. Perhaps, were you to go abroad for a single year, you would feel less surprised at the extent of my acquisitions.”

“Indeed, sir, do you really think so?”

“I do—’pon my honor I do. Your place here is a very fine one. You have, I understand, some ten thousand acres in this estate—‘the Old Barony’ it’s called—slaves in sufficient number to cultivate it, and really everything remarkably attractive and pleasant. I can very well understand how it is that you should not care to leave it even for a season: but if you only knew what a joy travelling is—to go here and go there—see this thing and that—be asked to this fête and that palace—and know that the whole gay world is looking for your presence and depending on your smile; if you only knew this, Miss Middleton, you’d give up your acres and your slaves, your barony and all its oaks; think them all flat, stale, and unprofitable—you’d——”

“Oh, sir, excuse me. You are too eloquent. If I remain longer, I shall be persuaded to go; and I must go in order to remain. Good morning, sir. I trust that you will devote your earliest leisure to the poor young woman.”

The surgeon bent and bowed almost to the ground, while his hand was pressed to his lips with the air of exquisite refinement which distinguished that period. The dandy is clearly human. All ages have possessed the creature under one guise or another. The Roman, the Greek, the Egyptian, the Hebrew, all the Asiatics, the English, and the French, have all borne testimony to their existence; and, perhaps, there is no dandy half so ultra in his styles as the Cherokee or the Chickasaw. Nature and art both declare his existence and recognise his pretensions. In this point of view common sense can urge no objections to him.

He clearly has an allotted place in life ; and like the wriggling worm that puts on a purple jacket and golden wings, though we may wonder at the seeming waste of so much wealth, we can not deny its distribution, and must suppose that the insect has its uses, however unapparent. The exquisite may stand in the same relation to the human species as the jay or the peacock among the birds. These teach the vanity of their costume while displaying it : as the man of sense learns to avoid the folly, even in degree, which is yet the glory of the fool.

“Charming creature!” exclaimed the dandy, yawning, and throwing himself backward on the cushions of the huge sofa, which stood temptingly contiguous—“Charming creature! She deserves some painstaking. Her person is not fine, but her lands are ; her beauties are few, but her slaves are many. She is rather simple, perhaps ; but, gad, my soul! he is hard indeed to satisfy whom these fine grounds, excellent mansion, good lands, charming groves, and balmy atmosphere would not reconcile to any sacrifices. We must make it, some day or other, all of us ; and though, Augustus Hillhouse, be thou not too nice! Already hast thou suffered many a choice fleshly dainty to slip through thy fingers because of thy fastidious stomach. Beware! Thou art wasting time which is precious. Age will come upon thee! Age! ah!”—with a shiver—“it will need fine mansion, and noble park, and goodly income, to reconcile that to thy philosophy. ‘In the days of thy youth,’ saith the proverb. I will take counsel of it in season. The damsel’s worth some painstaking, and the sacrifice is not without its reward. But such a gown and stomacher as she wears! I must amend all that. There is also an absence of finish in the manner, which too decidedly betrays the rustic. Her voice, too, has a twang—a certain peasant-like sharpness, which grates harshly upon the ear. But these things may be amended!—yes, they may be amended. I must amend them, certainly, before I can commit myself among my friends ; for what would Lady Bell, who is a belle no longer, say to such a bodice, such a stomacher, and, above all, to a carriage which shows a degree of vigor so utterly foreign to good breeding. I must teach her languor, and that will be the worst task of all, for it will require exertion. She

must learn to lounge with grace, to sigh with a faint-like softness, to open her eyes as if she were about to shut them, and, when she speaks, to let her words slide out through the tips of her lips as if she were striving all she could, short of positive effort, to keep them in. Ah, charming Bell! sweet Lady Charlotte! and thou, dearest of all the dears, fair Moncrieff!—could this barony-girl grow wise in those things in which ye are so excellent, how much lovelier were she than all of ye! Ye are landless, sweet ladies—and therefore ye are loveless. These acres weigh heavily against your charms. Augustus Hillhouse, be not foolish in thy fastidiousness. Take the fruits which the gods bestow upon thee, and quarrel not with the bounty because of the too much red upon the apple. It is a good fruit, and the red may be reconciled, in due season, to a becoming delicacy.”

The dandy soliloquized at greater length, but neither his euphuism nor his philosophy finds much favor in our sight. We are not of that class of writers who delight in such detail, and we shall not, accordingly—and this omission may surprise the fashionable reader—furnish the usual inventory of Mr. Hillhouse's dress and wardrobe. Enough that it was ample even for his purposes, and enabled him to provide a change, and a different color, for every day in the month. He had his purple and his violet, his green and his ombre, the one was for the day of his valor, the other for his sentiment, the third for his love-sadness, and the fourth for his feeling of universal melancholy. We shall only say, that his violet was worn at his first interview with Flora Middleton.

While his head ran upon his marriage, a measure which he had now certainly resolved upon, it was also occupied with certain incidental and equally important topics, such as the dress which should he worn on such occasion—for the day of his marriage was the only day he had never before provided for—and the subsequent disposition of the goods and chattels which he was to take possession of with his wife. Stretched at length upon the cushions, with one leg thrown over an arm of the sofa, and the other resting upon the floor, his head raised upon the pillows, which had been drawn from both extremities for this purpose—his eyes half shut in dreamy languor, and his lips

gently moving as he whispered over the several heads of topics which engaged his reflection ; he was suddenly aroused by hearing the fall of a light footstep behind him. At first he fancied that it might be one of the servants, but a negro is usually a heavy-heeled personage, who makes his importance felt upon the floor, if nowhere else ; and when, in the next moment, Mr. Augustus Hillhouse remembered this peculiarity in his nature, he fancied that the intruder could be no other than the fair rustic whose acres he was then disposing of with the most mercantile facility. Nothing could be more natural than that she should very soon find her way back to the spot where it was possible to find him.

Under this impression, he started to his feet with an air of well-practised confusion ; and having been at some pains to throw into his countenance an excess of sweetness and sensibility, he turned his eyes, as he fancied, upon the fair intruder, to meet—not the lady of his love, nor one of the gentler sex at all—but a man, and such a man !

Never was creature so wofully confounded as our young gallant. The person who encountered his glance, though but for an instant only, was the very picture of terror—gaunt terror—lean misery, dark and cold ferocity. Clothed in the meanest homespun of the country, and that in tatters, the tall, skeleton form of a man, stood in the doorway, evidently receding from the apartment. In his eyes there was the expression of a vacant anger—something of disappointment and dislike—a look of surprise and dissatisfaction. In his hand, at the moment of his disappearance, Mr. Hillhouse fancied that he saw the sudden shine of steel. But he was so completely confounded by the apparition that he was for a few moments utterly incapable of speech ; and when he did speak, the spectre disappeared.

“ Who are you, and what do you want ? ” was the shivering inquiry which he made. A savage grin was the only answer of the stranger, and the next instant the surgeon stood alone

“ The devil, to be sure ! ” he exclaimed ; but, recovering his courage, he darted after his strange visiter. He rushed into the passage-way—out into the porch—ran down the steps, looked out into the court—but in vain. He could see nobody. Even

the sentinels, whom he knew to have been placed at the portals, front and rear, were withdrawn; and no object more suspicious than a lame negro met his eye in the whole range of vision that lay within it. He re-entered the house, more than ever satisfied that he had been favored with a visit from a personage whose intimacy implies brimstone and other combustibles; and a sudden resolution to resume his duties, and see at once into the condition of his patients, whom he began to think he had too long neglected, was the result of his supernatural visitation.

The first object of his care was the person of the outlaw—not because of his superior claims, or worse condition, but simply because he felt his nerves too much agitated to encounter the young lady in whose presence it was necessary to practise that nice and deliberate precision of tone and manner, language and address, which form the first great essentials of successful sentiment, in all ages, when dealing with the sex. Regarding Watson Gray as a mere circumstance in a large collection of dependencies—a sort of hanging-peg, or resting-point, a mounting-block, or a shoe-tie in the grand relationships of society—he had no scruple at exhibiting his real emotions in his presence; and he poured forth to the cooler and more rational scout the intelligence of which he was possessed.

Gray regarded the surgeon as a fool, but had no reason to suppose that he was a liar. He saw no reason to doubt that he had seen somebody, and concluded that his alarm had somewhat magnified the terrors of what he saw. But his description of the costume worn by the visiter was so precise and particular, that he well knew that neither the fears nor the follies of the other could have caused his invention of it; and, with graver looks than he himself was aware of, he descended instantly to the lower story.

There he found the sentinels, each at his post, and they swore they had been so from the beginning. This one circumstance led the scout to think more lightly of the surgeon's story; but there was still something in the description which had been given him that he could not dismiss from his consideration. He searched the immediate neighborhood of the premises, but without discovering anything to awaken his suspicions. *He saw*

nothing ; but a keen watchful eye followed *his* progress, every step which he made, along the avenue.

The father of Mary Clarkson had survived the conflict of the preceding night. It was his spectre which had so fearfully alarmed the contemplative surgeon. He had good reason for his alarm. His sudden movement alone, which enabled the vindictive old man to discern the slight popinjay person of the surgeon, saved him from the sharp edge of the uplifted knife. The *couteau de chasse* of the woodman—an instrument not unlike the modern bowie-knife—had, at one moment, nearly finished the daydreams of Mr. Hillhouse and his life together.

Finding nothing in his search like the object described, Watson Gray was disposed to think that the surgeon had seen one of the soldiers on duty, who had probably found his way into the mansion with the view of employing his eyes or his fingers—for the moral sense of the invading army, officers and soldiers, does not seem to have been very high ; but this idea was combated by the fact that Hillhouse had been for many years, himself, a member of the British army, and knew, as well as anybody, the costume of its several commands. The nervous excitement of the surgeon, which was not overcome when Gray returned to the chamber, was another argument against this notion. But a new light broke in upon Watson Gray when he remembered the ancient superstition along the Congaree.

“You’ve seen the ghost of the cassique,” he said, with a conclusive shake of the head ; “old Middleton walks, they say. I’ve heard it a hundred times. He used to wear homespun and a hunting-shirt—though I never heard it was ragged—and the big knife and rifle were never out of his hands. The Congaree Indians used to call him King Big Knife, and, sure enough, he made it work among the red skins whenever they came about his quarters and didn’t carry themselves rightly. He was a most famous hunter ; and, between the bears and the savages, the knife and rifle had very little rest with him. I reckon it’s him you’ve seen, though it’s something strange for a ghost to walk in broad daytime.”

The surgeon was not entirely satisfied with this explanation ;

not because it seemed very unreasonable, but simply because it clashed with his habitual philosophy.

"Ah, my good friend," he exclaimed patronizingly, "I see you labor under some very vulgar errors. The belief in ghosts is entirely done away with. Ghosts, like continental money, had their value only so long as the people had their credulity. The moment you doubt, the ghosts disappear, and the money is rejected. They found credit only among a simple people and in the early stages of society. As philosophy—divine not crabbed, as dull fools suppose—as philosophy began to shed her beams upon the world"—&c.

Watson Gray had already ceased to listen, and we may as well follow his example. Talking still, however, while working about the wounds of his patient, the surgeon at length awakened another voice; and the faint, but coherent words of the outlaw, summoned the scout to his bedside.

"Where am I?—what does all this mean, Gray?"

But the surgeon interfered, and for five minutes expatiated on the great danger to a patient situated as he was, in using his own, or hearing the voice of any but his professional attendant.

"Nothing, my good sir, can be more injurious to the nervous system, particularly where there is any tendency upward—any mounting of the blood to the brain! I have known numberless instances where the results have been fatal, even of the most trifling conversation. Once in India, a colonel of cavalry, as brave a fellow as ever lived—Monckton—a noble fellow—dressed like a prince—won every woman he looked at, and was happy in never being made to marry any—he suffered from a gunshot wound, got in a desperate charge which he made at the head of his regiment, upon the native troops. The rajah himself fell—and my poor friend Monckton——"

"Pshaw!" feebly exclaimed the outlaw, but with an emphasis and manner sufficiently marked to be offensive.

"Pshaw! pshaw! sir—do you mean 'pshaw!' sir, an epithet of contempt, or——"

The wounded man interrupted him—

"Pray, my good sir, be silent for a moment, while I hear what my friend says. Come hither, Gray."

I warn you, sir—I wash my hands of the responsibility!” exclaimed the now indignant surgeon. “Pshaw! pshaw!—and to me!”

“Gray, can’t you turn that fool fellow from the room?” said Morton, in a tone which was only inaudible to Hillhouse from the feebleness of the speaker. But no such steps were necessary. The indignant surgeon availed himself of the moment to obey the requisition of Miss Middleton, and visit his other patient: and the outlaw and his subordinate were left undisturbed to a long, and, to them, not an uninteresting conference.

This conference had relation to many events and interests which do not affect the progress of this narrative, and do not accordingly demand our attention; but we may add, that no portion of the intelligence which Watson Gray brought his commander was of half the interest, in his mind, as those events which we have previously related, in the occurrences of Brier Park, after the moment of Edward Morton’s insensibility.

“That I live at all is almost miraculous,” was the remark of the outlaw; “for I had goaded him”—meaning his brother—“almost to desperation, and when my hand failed me I looked for death.”

“But why do this?” was the earnest inquiry of Gray; “why, when so much was at stake? I thought you had made it your chief care, and believed it your correct policy, particularly as concerns Miss Flora, to keep him in the dark. Why tell him all—why goad him with this knowledge?”

“So it was my policy, and so I had resolved; but the devil and my own passions drove me to do it; and some other feelings which I could not well account for. Hate, hate, hate! was at the bottom of all, and I suppose I needed blood-letting.”

“You have had it—enough of it.”

“Ay, but I live in spite of it, Watson Gray, and I feel that I shall still live. I shall not die this bout—not while I am here—here in the same house with her, and while all things below are, as you tell me, ripe and favorable. This alone is enough to cure wounds thrice as numerous and thrice as deep as mine. I am here with her, and let me but use these limbs once more, and the victory and the prize are mine. I will wear them, Watson

Gray, with a savage joy which shall find triumph in a thousand feelings which confer anything but joy. She shall know, and he shall know, what it is to have felt with feelings such as mine."

The outlaw sank backward from exhaustion, and Watson Gray found it necessary to enforce the suggestions of the surgeon, and to impose upon the speaker that restraint which his weakness showed to be more than ever necessary. This was a difficult task; the outlaw being impatient to hear particulars, and dilate upon hopes and passions, which filled all the secret avenues of his soul with joy! It was only by warning him of the danger of defeating everything by tasking his powers prematurely, that he was subdued to silence; but his lips still worked with his desire to speak, and while he lay with shut eyes upon his couch, almost fainting with exhaustion, his heart heaved with the exulting images which fancy had already arrayed before his mind, in preparing his contemplated triumph. That triumph included the possession of Flora Middleton, and his escape with her, and other treasures, only less valuable in his own estimation, and of far greater value in that of his confederate. Already he was dreaming of groves in the West Indian islands; of a safe retreat from the snares of enemies; and of the possession of those charms which had equally warmed his mind and his passions. Dreaming, he slept; and Watson Gray availed himself of his repose to snatch a brief hour of oblivion from the same auspicious influence.

CHAPTER XXVII.

GUILT, AND ITS VICTIM.

THE course of the surgeon, when he left the chamber of the outlaw, was taken, as we have seen, to the apartment of his other patient. The indignation which he felt at the conduct of Morton, in rejecting, in terms of such contempt, his counsel to silence; expedited his movements, and, muttering while he went, the discomfiture which he felt, he found himself in the presence of Miss Middleton before he had entirely smoothed his ruffled front for such a meeting. But Mr. Hillhouse prided himself on his possession of all those nice requisities which constitute, *par excellence*, the essentials of ladies-man. Among these may be reckoned a countenance which no unruly passions could ever discompose. He started, with an air of studied, theatrical modesty, when, at the entrance of the chamber, he saw the young lady;—passed his kerchief once over his face, and the magic consequences of such a proceeding, were instantly apparent. The wrinkles and frowns had all disappeared, and sweet sentiment and deliberate love alone appeared upon that territory which they had unbecomingly usurped. The surgeon approached trippingly, and in a half whisper to Flora, communicated his apologies.

“I still tremble, Miss Middleton, for I had almost ventured into your presence with an angry visage. The truth is, I am sometimes susceptible of anger. My patient in the opposite apartment proves to be unruly. He has annoyed me. He rejects good counsel, and he who rejects counsel need not take physic. Counsel, Miss Middleton, has been happily designated, the physic of the soul, and should never be rejected——”

“Except, perhaps, when given as physic, sir;—but will you look at this poor young woman. I am afraid you can do but little for her. She grows worse every moment.”

“A-hem!—The limit to human art has not yet been found, Miss Middleton. The patient has frequently been rescued from the very fingers of death. My own successes in this respect have been numerous and remarkable. I remember once in Ceylon, sometime in the autumn of 1772, I had a case of this very sort, and a young woman too. She fractured her skull by falling from a window, in an effort to reach her lover. The affair occasioned not a little sensation at the time. The parties were something more than respectable on all sides; but an unconquerable aversion to her lover which her father entertained threatened to defeat their desires. You need not be told, Miss Middleton, that where a young woman loves, she will do anything to secure the object of her attachment. He was worthy of her. He was an Irishman, his name Macartney—and certainly, for that day, had the most inimitable taste in the arrangement of his cravat, of any man I ever knew. He could make a pendant to it, a sort of *nœud Gordienne*, which I would defy the prettiest fingers in the world to unravel. The knot appeared like a ball, a single globe, from which hung two lappets, being the open ends of the kerchief. Sometimes, with singular ingenuity, he would alter the design so as to leave but one lappet, and then, it might be likened to a comet, with a tail—such a one as I saw at Paris, in 1769. I doubt if you were then quite old enough to have seen that comet, but you may have heard of it. It had a most prodigious tail—fully sixty degrees in length, as computed by the astronomers.”

It was with a degree of disgust, almost amounting to loathing, that Flora Middleton listened to the stuff of the voluble exquisite, poured forth all the while that he pursued his examination into the hurts of his patient. It seemed shocking that one could speak at such a moment, on any subject but such as was essential to the successful performance of the task in hand; but that he should enlarge on such wretched follies, with so much suffering before his eyes, seemed to her still more shocking, strange, and unnatural.

It will be remembered that Flora Middleton was a country-girl, to whom the resources and employments of the conventional world of fashion, were almost entirely unknown, except

from books, and if she heard anything of such extravagancies in them, they were very likely to be thrown by, as too silly for perusal, and too idle for belief. The plaintive moans and occasional ejaculations of the poor girl offered the only interruption to the garrulity of the surgeon, but did not seem to awaken any feeling. He commented on this insensibility, by a quotation from Shakspeare, which served for the time to divert him entirely from the subject.

“ ‘How use doth breed a habit in a man!’ I do believe, Miss Middleton, though I should think just as much of her as before, and feel just as desirous of doing her a service, that I could take off the leg of my grandmother with as much composure and indifference, as perform on the most indifferent stranger. Did you ever have a tooth drawn, Miss Middleton?”

He urged this question with great gravity, but did not wait for the answer.

“A painful operation to the patient, decidedly, and the only surgical operation which I have any reluctance to perform. My objection arose from a very rational circumstance. When in my teens, and a student—a time as you perceive not very remote, Miss Middleton, though my worldly experience has been so extensive and so rapid—I was called upon to extract a tooth from the mouth of a young lady, the daughter of a singing-master in Bath. She was very nervous, and gave me a great deal of trouble to get her to submit. But I had scarcely got my finger into her mouth—being about to use the lancet—when—look what a mark!”—showing his finger—“it will last me to my grave, and, as you see, disfigures terribly the entire member!—She closed her jaw upon me, and—ah! I feel the thrill of horror even now, which seemed to run through my whole system. Nay, by my faith, would you think it—not content with taking hold, she seemed no way disposed to let go again, and it was only by main force that she was persuaded to recollect that my finger had no real or natural connection with her incisors. Young ladies are said to keep possession of their favorites with a tenacity peculiar to themselves, but a mode like this, Miss Middleton, you will readily admit, was neither loving nor ladylike.”

As she looked and listened, Flora could scarce forbear the exclamation of "unfeeling fool;" while the reflection which has occurred to every mind which has ever observed and thought, suggested to hers the strong identity which exists between the extremely callous and cold nature, and that in which levity seems a leading characteristic. The extremes inevitably meet. The bear can dance, and the monkey, which is one of the most sportive, if not the most formidable, is one of the most malignant of the wild tribes of the forest. A frivolous people is apt to be a savage people, and the most desperate Indian warriors prefer the looking-glass worn about their necks to any other ornament.

While the surgeon was prating in this fashion, he was extorting groans from the poor girl whose hurts he examined without seeming to be conscious of the pain he gave; and the finger which he presented for examination as that which had so much suffered from the jaws of the lady of Bath was stained with the crimson hues from the fractured skull which he had been feeling. Mr. Hillhouse was considered a good surgeon in the British army; and, it may be, that the very callosity which shocked the sensibilities of Flora Middleton, would not only commend him to the rough soldier, who acquires from his daily practice an habitual scorn of the more becoming humanities, but was, indeed, one cause of his being an excellent operator. His skill, however, promised to avail nothing in behalf of his female patient; and when, at length, after a thousand episodes, Flora obtained from him his final opinion, though it said nothing, it signified much.

The mournful presentiments of the poor girl, expressed to her betrayer but a few days before, promised to be soon realized. Her wounds, mental and bodily, were mortal. Her mind was gone. Her body was sinking fast. The seat of reason was usurped by its worst foe; and delirium raved with unabashed front and unabashed presence, over the abandoned empire of thought. Wild and wretched were the strange and incoherent expressions which fell from her lips. Now she spoke of her childhood, now of her father; and when she spoke of him, her eyes would unclose, and shudderingly steal a hasty glance for a few moments around the chamber—meeting the gaze of Flora

Middleton, they would suddenly turn aside, or told themselves up again, as if anxious to exclude a painful object from their survey.

But there was one name which, like the keynote in an elaborate strain of artificial music, sounded ever preclusive to the rest; and the keen ear of Flora heard with surprise the frequent iteration, in tones of the most touching tenderness and entreaty, of the name of Edward. Never once did the listener conjecture to whom this name applied. It was the name of the father, perhaps the brother, the dear friend; but never once did she fancy the true relation which made it dear, and fatal as it was dear, to the unhappy victim. Could she have guessed the truth—could she have dreamed, or in any way been led to a prescience of the truth—how would that suffering, but proud heart, have melted at the stern cruelty which its injustice was momentarily doing to the faithful but absent lover! Her meditations were those of the unsophisticated and pure-souled woman.

“I will not let her suffer,” she murmured to herself, while she sat beside the dying creature. “I will not let her suffer, though, poor victim, she little fancies how much suffering her presence brings to me. Her miserable fall, and wretched fortunes, shall not make her hateful in my sight. God keep me from such cruel feelings, and strengthen me against temptation. Let me treat her kindly, and not remember to her detriment that Clarence Conway has been her destroyer. O, Clarence, Clarence! You, of whom I thought such pure and noble thoughts—you, who seemed to me so like a man in excellence—as man was when he spoke unabashed in the presence of the angels—how could you stoop to this baseness, and riot on the poor victim, abusing the fond attachment which proved her only weakness, and which, in the eye of him she loved, should have been her chief security and strength.”

Had Flora Middleton lived more in the world, and in the great cities thereof, she might have been less severe in examining the supposed conduct of her lover. Her soliloquy might have been softened, as she reflected upon the numbers among her sex, vicious and artful, who save the betrayer some of his toils, and are caught sometimes in their artifices; but of this

class of persons she had no knowledge, and did not even conjecture their existence. She took it for granted that Clarence Conway was the one who was wholly guilty—his victim was only weak through the strength of her attachment. The warmth of her own regards for her lover enabled her to form a correct idea of that overpowering measure which had been the poor girl's destruction; and thinking thus, she had no indulgence for him, whom she regarded as one recklessly, and without qualification, wicked.

But the truth is, even Edward Morton, the real wrong-doer, had not, in this case, deserved entirely this reproach. There was some truth in the sarcasm which he uttered to Mary Clarkson, when he told her that her own vanity had had considerable part in her overthrow. She felt the partial truth of the accusation, and her own reproaches followed on her lips. It would be doing injustice to the outlaw, were we to describe him as indifferent to her situation. There was still something human in his nature—some portion of his heart not utterly ossified by the selfishness which proved its chief characteristic. In the long and earnest conversation which followed, between him and his confidante in his chamber after the exclusion of the surgeon, he had asked and received all the information which could be given on the subject of the events which had made Mary Clarkson a victim to a like misfortune, and in consequence of the same circumstances, with himself. He did not know the fact, nor could Watson Gray inform him, that she received her hurts because of the feeble attempt which she made to come to his relief. But, all the circumstances led to this conviction, and when the outlaw resurveyed the ground over which he had gone, and her unvarying devotedness through the long and perilous period of strife, toil, and danger, which had marked his footsteps;—when he remembered how many had been her sacrifices, how firm had been her faith—the only one true, amid the many false or doubtful, and only secured by purchase;—when the same train of thought reminded him that, for all this devotion, she had received few smiles, and no love, from the very person for whom alone she smiled, and who monopolized, without knowing how to value, all the love of which she was capable;—it was then

possibly for the first time in his life, that the cold and keen reproaches of remorse touched his heart.

"I have done the poor creature wrong—I have not valued her as she deserved. See to her, Gray, for God's sake, and let not that fool of a surgeon, if he can do anything, spare his efforts. If she survives I will make amends to her. I will treat her more kindly; for never has poor creature been more faithful; and I'm inclined to think that she must have been hurt in some idle attempt to come to my succor. You say you found her on the same spot?"

"Very nearly."

"Surely, Clarence Conway could not have drawn weapon upon her!"

"You forget. She was dressed in men's clothes, and in the darkness of the evening."

"Yes, yes—but still a mere boy in appearance, and there never was a brighter moonlight. Nobody would have used deadly weapon upon one whose form was so diminutive and evidently feeble. She was sick, too—she told me so; but I had heard her complain so often, that I gave her no credit for sincerity, and sent her back to watch those d—d plotting scoundrels in the swamp. Would the fiends had them!"

We need not pursue this dialogue farther. The exhaustion of the outlaw left him temporarily oblivious on the subject of the girl; but, towards evening, starting up from a brief, uneasy slumber, his first inquiry was into her condition. When told that her skull was fractured, that she was raging with fever and delirium, the outlaw sank back, shut his eyes, and, though awake, lay in a rigid silence, which showed the still active presence of those better feelings of which it was his misfortune to possess but few, and those too feeble for efficient and beneficial service. How small was their effect, may be judged from the success of the means employed by Watson Gray to divert his mind from the gloomy fit into which he seemed to have fallen. That vicious adherent seized the moment to inform him of the steps he had taken to lay the wrong done her innocence at the door of Clarence Conway, and to convey this impression to Flora Middleton. The exultation of a selfish hope came in to silence

remorse, and the outlaw opened his eyes to eulogize the prompt villany of his confederate.

“A good idea that, and it can do poor Mary no harm now; and how looks Flora since she heard it? Have you seen her since?”

“Yes: she looks twice as tall, and ten times as haughty as before.”

“Flora Middleton to the life! The Semiramis or Zenobia of the Congaree. As proud as either of those dark, designing dames of antiquity. She fancied that you were pitying her whenever your eyes turned upon her face, and after that her only effort was to make herself seem as insensible and indifferent as if she never had a heart. Ah! Gray, my good fellow, only get me on my legs again before Rawdon is compelled to take to his, and if I do not carry the proud damsel off from all of them, I deserve to lose all future stakes as well as all the profits of the past. Keep that fool fellow of a surgeon from probing me, simply that he may use his instrument and fingers, and let him only do what you think necessary or useful. I can't well believe that such a civet-scented thing as that can possibly be of any use, except to wind silk, or tend upon poodles; and would sooner have *your* doctoring than that of the whole tribe. Get me my limbs again, and the rest is easy.”

What was that rest? What were those hopes which gave such a tone of exultation to the voice and language of the wounded man? We need not anticipate. The conjecture is only too easy. What should they be, springing in such a rank soil, and born of such seed as his criminal hands had planted? Dark, deep, and reckless, was the determination of his soul; and wily, in the highest degree, was the confederate to whose aid in particular, its execution was to be intrusted. At this moment it need only be said that, in the mind of the conspirators, nothing appeared to baffle their desires but the condition of their chief. All things seemed easy. The fortune they implored, the fiend they served, the appetite which prompted, and the agents they employed, all subservient, were all in waiting; and he who, of all, was to be most gratified by their services—he alone was unable to make them available. Well might he curse

the folly which had brought him to his present state, and denounce the feebleness which delayed the last and crowning achievement on which his hopes and desires were now set. His soul chafed with impatience. He had no resources from thought and contemplation. He could curse, but he could not pray; and curses, as the Arabian proverb truly describes them, are like chickens, that invariably come home to roost. They brought neither peace nor profit to the sick bed of the invalid, and they kept refreshing slumbers from his pillow.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PHILOSOPHICAL DOUBTS AND INQUIRIES.

THE angry feelings which the conduct of the outlaw had produced in the bosom of Mr. Surgeon Hillhouse, had driven, for the time, another affair from his recollection about which he was particularly desirous to speak with Miss Middleton or her grandmother. A ramble in the woods that same morning enabled him to recover his temper and, with it, his recollection; and when the dinner things were removed that day, he fairly conducted the old lady to the sofa, placed himself beside her, and with looks big with the sagacious thought, and busy speculation, he propounded himself as follows in a language somewhat new to him, of sententious inquiry.

“Mrs. Middleton—madam—pray oblige me by letting me know what sort of a looking person was your grandfather?”

“My grandfather, sir—my grandfather!”

“Yes, madam, your grandfather—how did he look—how did he dress—was he tall or short—stout or slender. Did he wear breeches of blue homespun, a tattered hunting shirt of the same color and stuff; and was his *couteau de chasse* as long as my arm?”

“My grandfather, sir! Why, sir, what do you mean?”

“No harm, no offence, believe me, Mrs. Middleton—on the contrary, my question is prompted by grave doubts, and difficulties and, possibly, dangers! No idle or impertinent curiosity occasions it. Philosophy is seriously interested in your reply.”

“My grandfather, sir—why he has been dead these hundred years! I do not think I ever saw him.”

“Dead a hundred years! Impossible! Eh! How can that be?” demanded the surgeon in astonishment scarcely less than that which the old lady herself had manifested at the beginning; —“dead a hundred years! Really, Mrs. Middleton—there must be some mistake.”

“Indeed, sir—then it is yours, not mine. My grandfather has been dead more than a hundred years. He died in France somewhere in 1680—or ’81——”

“Oh he died in France, did he? You are right, madam, there is a mistake, and it is mine. To be sure it was not your grandfather—if he died in France—about whom I wished to know; —it was *Miss* Middleton’s grandfather.”

“My husband, sir!” said the old lady bridling with dignity, while her keen gray eyes flashed with all the vivacity of girlhood, as she conjectured the utterance of something impertinent from her companion. The surgeon felt his dilemma.

“Your husband, Mrs. Middleton,” he stammered—“Can it be? *Miss* Middleton’s grandfather your husband?”

“And why not, sir when I have the honor to be her grandmother?”

“True, true, most true, madam, but——”

“It does not alter the case very materially, sir, so far as you are interested. Your right is just as great to inquire into the private history of *her* grandfather as of mine. Pray, proceed in your questions, sir, if as you think, so much depends upon it. We are retired country people, it is true, Mr. Millhouse——”

“*Hillhouse*, madam—Augustus *Hillhouse*, of his majesty’s——”

“Pardon me, sir—*Mr. Hillhouse*—I was simply about to encourage you to ask your question by assuring you that, though retired and rustic, we are still not utterly insensible, on the banks of the Congaree, to the claims of philosophy. I trust

to see her schools established here before I die,* and may, possibly, have the pleasure of hearing you, yourself, expounding from one or other of her sacred chairs."

The surgeon bowed low at the unexpected compliment without perceiving the smile of irony by which it was accompanied.

"Ah, madam, you do me too much honor. I am but poorly fitted for the high station which you speak of. It is true, I am not indifferently read; I have seen the world—a fair proportion of it at least; and am considered very generally as a man fond of serious and severe investigations in the kindred temples of science and of nature, but——"

"Oh, sir, I have no sort of doubt that you will do well in any of the departments, and if ever we should be so fortunate as to obtain our liberties again, I have no doubt you will be thought of for some such situation."

"Ahem!—ahem! Libertics!—ah!—ahem!"

The termination of the sentence, which intimated a hope of British expulsion, was scarcely palatable to the surgeon.

"But, sir, on the subject of Miss Middleton's grandfather—my husband—the late General Middleton—what would you please to know?"

"Ahem—why, madam, the case presents itself in an aspect of increased difficulty. I had somehow confused it at first, and fancied when I spoke that I was addressing you on the subject of a very ancient relation. The connection being so close——"

"Makes no sort of difference, sir, if your question conveys nothing disrespectful."

The reply of the old lady bewildered the surgeon yet further. He was not sure that something disrespectful might not be conveyed to a very sensitive and jealous mind, in any form of the question, which was to solve his difficulties. In this state of bewilderment, with something of desperation in his air, he proposed another inquiry, seemingly so foreign to the previous topic

* A hope which the venerable lady in question lived to realize. The College of South Carolina, at Columbia, has been long in successful operation, and has the good fortune to have sent forth some of the best scholars and ablest statesmen in the Union. Its increasing prosperity induces the confident assurance that it will long continue a career of so much usefulness and good.—EDITOR

that Mrs. Middleton began to think him insane as well as silly."

"Mrs. Middleton, do you believe in ghosts?"

"Ghosts, sir!—a very singular question."

"Exactly so, madam, but it is a part of the subject."

"Indeed, sir!"

"Yes, ma'am, and I should be really very grateful if you would say whether you do or do not believe in that supernatural presence—that spectral visitation—that independent embodiment, in shape of limbs, sinews and substance, of the immortal spirit—which is vulgarly entitled an apparition, or ghost? Professionally, madam, as a surgeon, I'm not prepared to look further than the physical organization for the governing powers of the human form. A soul is a something that has eluded hitherto all the search of the anatomist, and the only authority which exists for such an agent, seems to me to be derived from testimonials, more or less authenticated, of the presence and reappearance of those whom we have considered dead, and no longer capable of the uses and purposes, the feelings and the desires, of ordinary life. Now, madam, something of my first inquiry depends upon my last. Pray oblige me, then, by saying whether you do or do not believe in this marvellous anomaly. Do you believe in ghosts or not?"

"Well, sir, to oblige you, though I am at a loss to see the connection between the one question and the other——"

"It's there—there is a connection, believe me."

"Well, sir, under your assurance, or without it, I can have no objection to say that I am very doubtful what to believe on such a subject. So much has been said on both sides—and I have heard so many wonderful stories about such things, from persons of such excellent credit, that——"

"Enough, enough, madam; I see you are not altogether incredulous. Now tell me, madam, did you ever yourself see a ghost?"

"Never, sir."

"Never!—nor any thing, shape, substance, or person, that ever looked like one, or looked like nothing else but one, or that you had reason to suppose was one, or that resembled any de

parted friend, relative, tie, connection, dependence—in short, did you never see anything that a suspicious mind might not have readily taken for a ghost?”

“Never, sir, to my recollection.”

“Well, madam,” continued the surgeon, taking courage from his own motion, “on your answer will depend the very important doubt whether I, Augustus Hillhouse, second surgeon in his majesty’s 87th regiment of foot, have not been favored by the visitation of the late General Middleton——”

“Sir!” exclaimed the old lady, rising with a most queenly air of dignity and pride.

“Yes, madam, that’s it!” replied the surgeon, rising also, and rubbing his hands together earnestly. “Here, while I lay on this very sofa, this very morning, after the breakfast was over, and Miss Middleton had gone—here, alone, I was favored by the sudden presence of one who might have risen from the floor, and, as far as I could see, sunk into it; who might have been, nay, as I have heard, must have been;—but on this head I would have your testimony, and for this reason did I desire to learn from you in what costume it was usually the custom for General Middleton to appear? Oblige me, my dear madam, by a clear and particular description of his dress, his weapons, his height, breadth, general appearance, the length of his nose, and of his hunting-knife——”

“Sir, this freedom—this scandalous freedom!” exclaimed the venerable matron.

“Do not be offended, Mrs. Middleton. I am governed, my dear madam, by no motives but those of the philosopher. I would thank you, then——”

“Sir, I must leave you. You trespass, sir, beyond your privilege. The subject is a sacred one with the widow. Let me hear no more of it.”

“But, my dear madam—one question only:—was he a tall person, slender, rather scant of frame—such a person as is vulgarly called raw-boned——”

“No more, Mr. Hillhouse, if you please.”

“But his dress, madam—and his nose.”

“Good morning, sir”

“His knife—was it long, very long—long as my arm?”

The matron bowed, as she was retiring, with a stern glance of her gray eye, which would have confounded any person but one so thoroughly absorbed in his philosophical follies as to be utterly incapable of observation. He pursued her to the foot of the stairs with a degree of impetuous eagerness, which almost made the old lady fancy that he purposely sought to offend and annoy her—a conjecture which by no means served to lessen the hauteur of her retiring movements.

“But, my dear madam, one word only”—implored the surgeon in an agony of entreaty—“touching his costume; only say whether it was of blue homespun, rather lightish in hue; were his smallclothes rather scantish, and of the same color;—and his hunting frock—was it not a little tattered and torn about the skirts, and on the shoulder?—and——

‘She goes, and makes no sign!’”

was the sad quotation from Shakspeare, with which he concluded and which fitly described the inflexible silence in which the matron effected her departure.

“Devilish strange animal is woman! Here now is a question materially affecting the greatest mystery in our spiritual nature; which a word of that old lady might enable me to solve, and she will not speak that word. And why? Clearly, she was quite as anxious for the truth, at the beginning, as I was myself. But the secret is, that her pride stood in the way. Pride is half the time in favor of philosophy. Had her husband, instead of appearing in the ordinary guise of one of the natives—which must be confessed to be a very wretched taste—but put scarlet breeches on his ghost, the old woman would have been willing to acknowledge him. But she was ashamed of a ghost—even though it were her own husband—who should reappear in dingy blue homespun. And she was right. What ghost could hope to find faith, or respect, who paid so little attention to his personal appearance? It seems to me, if I should ever have any desire to ‘revisit the glimpses of the moon,’ and the favor were afforded me, I should be at quite as much trouble in making up my toilet as I am now; nay, more, for the task would be accompanied by increased difficulty. The complexion of a ghost would re-

quire a very nice selection of shades in costume. Whether my violet would not be the most suitable? Really, the question increases in interest. I shall certainly study it carefully. The delicacy of the violet is an argument in its favor, but some deference must be shown to the universal judgment of ages, which represents ghosts as commonly appearing in white. To this, the case of Hamlet's father and General Middleton furnish the only exceptions that I remember. How then should a ghost be habited? How should *I* be habited, appearing as a ghost? The query is one of delicate interest. I must consult with myself, my pocket mirror, and the lovely Flora Middleton!"

This dialogue, and these grave reflections, resulted in the temporary exhaustion of the surgeon. He yawned listlessly, and once more threw himself upon the sofa where he had been favored with his ghostly visitation; but, on this occasion, he took special care that his face should front the entrance. Here he surrendered himself for a while to those dreaming fancies with which the self-complacent are fortunately enabled to recompense themselves for the absence of better company; and passing, with the rapidity of insect nature, from flower to flower, his mind soon lost, in the hues which it borrowed as it went, every trace of that subject to which it had been seemingly devoted with so much earnestness.

Meanwhile Mrs. Middleton joined her grand-daughter in the chamber of poor Mary Clarkson. It needed not the verdict of the surgeon to declare that she must die; and all his professional jargon could not have persuaded the spectator, who gazed upon her pale and wretched features, to believe that she could by any possibility survive. The eternal fiat had gone forth. The messenger of mercy—for such, happily, was the angel of death to her—was on his way. She might sink in a few hours, she might live as many days, but she was evidently dying. But there was a strange life and brightness in her eyes. The vitality of her glance was heightened by delirium into intense spirituality. She keenly surveyed the persons in attendance with a jealous and suspicious glance, the cause of which they could only ascribe to the mind's wandering. Her eyes turned ever from them to the entrance of the apartment; and once, when

Flora Middleton went to place an additional pillow beneath her head, she grasped her hand convulsively, and murmured with the most piteous accents—

“Take him not from me—not yet—not till I am dead, and in the cold, cold grave! Why will you take him from me? I never did you harm!”

Very much shocked, Flora shuddered, but replied—

“Of whom speak you, my poor girl?—what would you have me do?”

“Of whom?—of him! Surely you know?—of Conway! Take him not from me—not—not till I am in the grave! Then—oh then!—it will not need then! No! no!”

The interval of sense was brief, but how painful to the listening maiden!

“Fear nothing!” said Flora, somewhat proudly. “God forbid that I should rob you of any of your rights.”

“Oh! but you can not help it!—you can not help it!” cried the sufferer. “I know—I know what it is to love—and to suffer for it! But, will you not let me see him—let me go to him—or bid them bring him here to me! I can not die till I have seen him!”

“That can not be, my poor girl; he is not here. He is gone. I trust that God will enable you to live to see him.”

“He is gone! You mean that he is dead! Ha!—can it be that? I did not come in time! I saw them fight! I heard them swear and strike—hard—heavy blows, with sharp steel! Oh, God! that brothers should fight, and seek to destroy each other! I called to them to stop; but I saw their heavy blows; and when I ran to part them—I fell, and such a pain! My poor, poor head! He killed us both—the cruel brother!—he killed us both with his heavy blows.”

“My poor girl,” said Flora, “do not make yourself miserable with this mistake. Believe what I tell you. Mr. Clarence Conway is in no danger; he escaped. The only sufferer is Mr. Edward Conway, who is hurt. He lies in the opposite chamber.”

The words of the speaker were drowned in the shrieks of the sufferer, now, once more, a maniac. Successive screams of a mixed emotion—a something of delight and agony in ‘the utter-

ance—followed the communication of Flora Middleton, and were followed by a desperate effort of the poor girl to rise from the bed and rush from the apartment. It required all the strength of an able-bodied female slave, who watched with her young mistress in the apartment, to keep her in the bed; and the restraint to which she was subjected only served to increase her madness, and render her screams more piercing and intolerable than ever. Her wild, anguished words filled the intervals between each successive scream. But these were no longer coherent. When she became quieted at length, it was only through the exhaustion of all the strength which sustained her during the paroxysm. Strong aromatics and strengthening liquors were employed to restore her to consciousness; and the scientific exquisite from below, startled from his dreaming mood by the summons of the servant, was sufficiently impressed by the painful character of the spectacle he witnessed, to apply himself in earnest to the task of restoring her, without offending the good taste of the ladies by the exercise of his customary garrulity. She was brought back to life, and the keen scrutiny of Flora Middleton discovered, as she fancied, that her senses were also restored.

There was an air of cunning in the occasionally upturned glance of her half-shut eye, which forced this conviction upon the spectator. When Flora changed her position, the eye of the sufferer followed her movements with an expression of curiosity, which is one of the most natural forms of intelligence. She had also become, on a sudden, excessively watchful. Every sound that was heard from without aroused her regards; and, when she saw that she was noticed by those around her, her own glance was suddenly averted from the observer, with an air of natural confusion.

These were signs that warned Flora of the necessity of giving her the most patient and scrupulous attention. It was obvious to all that she could not survive that night. The surgeon, rubbing his hands at nightfall, gave his ultimatum to this effect; and yielded up his charge as hopeless; and the gloomy feelings of Flora Middleton were somewhat modified when she reflected that death could not possibly be a misfortune to one to whom

life seemed to have borne only the aspects of unmixed evil. What should she live for? More neglect—more shame—more sorrow!—the blow that forces the victim to the dust, and mocks at his writhings there. Mary Clarkson had surely endured enough of this already. It could not be the prayer of friendship which would desire her to live only for its sad continuance; and to live at all, must be, in the case of that hapless creature, to incur this agonizing penalty. But Flora Middleton could still pray for the victim. Forgiveness might be won for her errors, and, surely, where the penalties of folly and of sin are already so great in life, the mercy of Heaven will not be too rigorously withheld. This was her hope, and it may well be ours.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE AVENGER BAFFLED.

THE screams of the maddened victim of his lust and selfishness, had reached the ears of Edward Morton in his chamber. They had startled him from slumbers, which no doubt, had their images of terror, such as thronged about the couch of Richard, and sat heavy upon his soul. The piercing agony of those shrieks must have strangely tallied with his dreams, for he started almost erect in his couch, his eyes wild and staring, his hair moist yet erect, his words broken, thick, and incoherent. His attendant, Watson Gray, who had been a faithful watcher beside his couch, ran to him, and pressed him gently back upon the pillows, using such language as he fancied might soothe to quiet his nervous excitation; but, as the shrieks were continued, and seemed to acquire greater volume with each successive utterance, there was still an influence, beyond his power of soothing, to keep the guilty and wounded man in a state of agitation.

“What mean these hideous cries, Gray? was there not some one besides yourself in my chamber before they began? Did they take nobody hence—now, now—but now?”

“No! you have been dreaming only. You are feverish. Be quiet—on your keeping quiet depends everything.”

“So it does; but can’t you silence those noises? I should know those tones. Can it be—are they Mary’s? Is she dying?”

The question was put by the outlaw in low, husky tones, which were scarcely audible. The answer was necessarily uttered in the affirmative, though Gray was reluctant to speak the truth, and would have readily availed himself of a falsehood, had a plausible one that moment suggested itself to his mind.

“They are operating upon her, perhaps?” continued Morton; “that d——d fellow of a surgeon!—he cares not what pain he gives her.”

“No, captain, there is no operation necessary. The doctor says it’ll be all over with her soon. He’s given her hurts the last dressing that she’ll ever need.”

“Ha! she will then die! She told me of this! I remember; but I did not believe! I would to God she might be saved, Gray! Can nothing still be done? See the surgeon; let him do his best. I’m afraid you’ve let her suffer.”

“No, every thing’s been done. Old Mrs. Middleton and Miss Flora have been nursing and watching her the best part of the time themselves.”

“And there is then no hope? Poor Mary! Could she be brought up again, I should be more kind to her, Gray. I have been more of a savage to that poor, loving creature, than to any other human being; and I know not why, unless it was that she loved me better than all others. What a strange nature is that of man—mine, at least. How d——nably perverse has my spirit been throughout;—actually, and always, at issue with its own blessing. Ah! that shriek!—shut it out, Gray—close the door—it goes like a sharp, keen arrow to my brain!”

Under the momentary goadings of remorse, the outlaw buried his face in the bed-clothes, and strove to exclude from hearing the piercing utterance of that woe which was born of his wickedness. But, for a time, the effort was in vain. The heart-rending accents pursued him, penetrated the thin barriers which would

have excluded them from the ears of the guilty man, and roused him finally to a state of excitement which Watson Gray momentarily dreaded would drive him to a condition of delirium little short of hers. But, suddenly, the cries of terror ceased; so suddenly, that the outlaw started with a shudder at the unexpected and heavy silence.

"It is all over with her. She is dead. Go you and see, Gray. Quickly, go! and tell me. Poor Mary! I could have been more just to her had her claims been less. I can not believe that she is dead. No! no!—not yet; though once I was wretch enough to wish it. Forgive me! God forgive me, for that wish!"

The voice of the outlaw subsided to a whisper. A cold shudder passed through his frame. His eyes were closed with terror. He fancied that the freed spirit of the woman whom he supposed dead, hovered above him, ere it took its final departure. Even the whispering accents which followed from his lips broke forth in spasmodic ejaculations.

"Forgive me, Mary; forgive! forgive! I should have loved you better. I have been a wretch—a cold, selfish, unfeeling wretch! I knew not your worth—your value—and now! Ha! who is there? who?—ah, Gray, is it you? Sit by me; take my hand in yours. Well, she is gone—she sleeps."

Gray had resumed his place by the bedside, while the eyes of the trembling criminal were closed. His approach startled the nervous man with a thrilling confirmation of the partial supernatural fear which had before possessed him.

"She sleeps," said Gray, "but is not dead. Her paroxysm has gone off; and, perhaps, she will only waken when death comes on."

"Ah! what a foolish terror possessed me but now. I fancied that she was beside me!—I could have sworn I heard her faintly whispering in my ears. What a coward this weakness makes me."

"Try to sleep, captain. Remember how much depends upon your soon getting well. We have a great deal to do, you know."

"Ah, true; you are a cool, sensible fellow, Gray. I will try

to sleep, but those dreams—those hideous dreams. Keep beside me, Gray—do not leave me.”

The slight reference which Gray had made to his worldly schemes and grosser passions, recalled the outlaw to his habitual self. He turned his head upon the pillow, while Gray took one of his hands quietly within his own. Sitting thus beside him it was not long before he discovered that the outlaw had sunk into a regular slumber; and, releasing his hold, he laid himself down at the foot of the bed, under the influence of a natural exhaustion, which soon brought a deeper sleep upon his senses than that which possessed those of his superior.

Night meanwhile stole onward with noiseless footstep, and a deep silence overspread the whole barony. The sleep of the outlaw was long, deep and refreshing. It indicated a favorable condition of his wounds, such as Watson Gray had predicted. The poor victim in the neighboring chamber seemed to sleep also, but her repose promised no such agreeable results. The lamp of life was flickering with uncertain light. The oil of the vessel was nearly exhausted. Flora Middleton approached her about midnight, and so still was her seeming sleep, so breathlessly deep did her slumbers appear, so composed her features, and so rigid her position, that the maiden was struck with the thought that the last sad change had already taken place. But, as she stooped over the face of the sleeper, her silken ringlets were slightly shaken by the faint breathing from her half-closed lips, which still betrayed the presence of the reluctant and lingering life. She appeared to sleep so sweetly and soundly that Flora determined to snatch a few moments of repose also. She needed such indulgence. She had robbed herself of many hours of accustomed sleep, in watching and waiting upon the wakeful sufferings of her involuntary guest. Calling in the servant whose own slumbers never suffered impediment or interruption in any situation, she resigned the invalid to her care, giving her special instructions to keep a good watch, and to summon her instantly when any change in the patient was at hand.

Mira, the negro woman to whom this trust was given, was one of the staid family servants such as are to be found in every ancient

southern household, who form a necessary part of the establishment, and are, substantially, members, from long use and habit, of the family itself. The children grow up under their watchful eyes, and learn to love them as if they were mothers, or at least grandmothers, maiden aunts, or affectionate antique cousins, who win their affections by bringing bon-bons in their pockets, and join them in all their noisy games. They rebuke the rudeness of the young, follow their steps in their errant progress, warn them of danger, and put them to bed at night. Mira was one of these valuable retainers, who had watched the childhood of Flora, and received from the latter all the kindness which she certainly deserved.

“Now, Mauma,” said Flora, at leaving her, “don’t go to sleep. You’ve slept all the evening, and can surely keep wakeful till I come. Call me the moment the poor girl awakens, or if you see any difference.”

Mira promised everything, took her seat beside the couch of the patient, and really set out with a serious determination to keep her eyes open to the last. But when did a negro ever resist that most persuasive, seductive, and persevering of all influences in the South, particularly in the balmy month of June? When did sleep deign to solicit, that he was not only too happy to embrace? Mira soon felt the deep and solemn stillness of the scene. The events of the few days previous had excited her along with the rest; and the exhaustion of her faculties of reflection, which is always a rapid affair in all the individuals of her race, necessarily made her more than ever susceptible to sleep. To do her all justice, however, she made the most strenuous efforts to resist the drowsy influence. She began several grave discussions with herself, but in an under-tone, on the occurrences of the week. She discussed the merits of the sundry prominent persons she had seen—Rawdon and the Conways—not forgetting the assistant surgeon, whom she resolved was either a prince or a “*poor buckrah*” in his own country, but which—and a vast interval lay between—she did not undertake to say. But the lamp burned dimly on the hearth—the shadows that flitted upon the walls, in correspondence with its flickering light, increased the gloom—the patient beside her was apparently sunk

in the deepest slumber, and it was in vain for the poor negro to contend with the magnetic influence. Her head was gradually bent forward, and, at length, lay upon the bedside. It was not long after this when she slept quite as soundly as if this blessing had never before been vouchsafed her.

When *she* slept, the patient ceased to do so. With that cunning which is said to mark most kinds of delirium, she had feigned the slumbers which she was never more to know. She perceived that she was watched—she knew that she was restrained; and, sane on one subject only, she had employed the little sense that suffering had left her in deceiving her keepers. From the moment when she was told that Edward Morton occupied a neighboring chamber, the only desire which remained to her in life was to see him before she died. For this had she raved in her paroxysm, but they did not comprehend her; and the strong leading desire of her mind had so far brought back her capacities of thought and caution, as to enable her to effect her object. When she saw Flora Middleton leave the chamber, her hopes strengthened; and, when the negro slept beside her, she rose from the couch, stealthily, and with a singular strength, which could only be ascribed to the fever in her system, and the intense desire—a fever in itself—which filled her mind. With a deliberation such as the somnambulist is supposed to exhibit, and with very much the appearance of one, she lifted the little lamp which was burning within the chimney, and treading firmly, but with light footstep, passed out of the apartment into the great passage-way of the mansion, without disturbing the fast-sleeping negro who had been set to watch beside her.

Meanwhile, her miserable and scarcely more sane father, was inhabiting the neighboring woods, and prowling about the premises of Brier Park, as the gaunt wolf hovers for his prey at evening, around the camp of the western squatter. The woods formed a convenient and accustomed shelter, and but little was required to satisfy his wants. He had but one large, leading appetite remaining, and food was only desirable as it might supply the necessary strength for the gratification of that appetite. Animal food did not often pass his lips—ardent spirits never. The stimulus derived from the one desire of his soul was enough

for his sustenance. Roots, acorns, and such stray bounty as could be stealthily furnished by the neighboring farmer or his slave, from the cornfield or the potato-patch, had been, since the beginning of the Revolution, the uncertain resource of all the "poor bodies that were out."

As one of these, Clarkson now found it easy to obtain the adequate supply of his creature wants, while in the neighborhood of Brier Park. He soon discovered that he could approach the negro houses, the kitchen, and finally, the mansion itself, without incurring much, if any risk. The soldiers who had been left behind, nominally to protect the ladies, but really as a safeguard to the wounded outlaw, were careless upon their watch. Though stationed judiciously and counselled earnestly by Watson Gray, they saw no cause for apprehension; and conjectured that the scout simply cried "wolf," in order to establish his own importance. He cautioned and threatened them, for he knew the sort of persons he had to deal with; but as soon as his back was turned, they stole away to little nooks in the wood, where, over a log, with a greasy pack of cards, they gambled away their sixpences, and sometimes their garments, with all the recklessness which marks the vulgar nature.

Clarkson soon found out their haunts, watched them as they stole thither, and then traversed the plantation at his leisure. In this manner he had ascertained all the secrets that he deemed it necessary to know. As his whole thought was addressed to the one object, so he neither asked for, nor heard, the information which concerned any other. To know where Edward Conway lay was the only knowledge which he desired; and this information he gained from one of the house servants. He had once penetrated to the door of the outlaw's chamber, but, on this occasion, a timely glimpse of Watson Gray and Mr. Hillhouse, warned him that the hour of vengeance must still further be delayed.

That night, however, of which we have spoken, seemed auspicious to his object. The skies were cloudy, and the moon obscured. A faint gray misty light pervaded the extent of space. The woods looked more gloomy than ever beneath it, and when the sentinels found that the mansion had sunk into its usual

evening quiet, they stole away to an outhouse, and were soon swallowed up in the absorbing interests of Jamaica rum and "old sledge." Clarkson looked in upon them as he went forward to the house; but he took no interest in them or their proceedings, when they were once out of his way. He penetrated to the house without interruption, ascended the stairs, and passed with impunity into the very chamber of the outlaw.

The lamp was nearly extinguished in the chimney. A faint light was thrown around the apartment, not sufficient to penetrate the gloom at the remoter ends of it, and it had been particularly placed in such a manner as to prevent it from playing upon the face of the suffering man. In consequence of this arrangement, the greater part of the couch lay entirely in shadow; and while Clarkson was looking about him in doubt which way to proceed, he distinguished the person of Watson Gray, lying almost at his feet upon the floor.

A glance at his face sufficed to show that he was not the man he sought; and, passing around the body of the sleeper, he cautiously approached the bed, and drawing the curtains on one side, was aware, from the deep breathing, and the occasional sigh which reached his ears, that the man for whom he had been so long in pursuit of was lying before him. His heart had long been full of the desire for vengeance, and his knife was ready in his hand. It wanted but sufficient light to show him where to strike with fatal effect, and the blow would have been given. He had but to feel for the breast of his enemy, and the rest was easy. He was about to do so, when the light in the apartment was suddenly increased. He looked up with momentary apprehension. The opposite curtain was drawn aside in the same moment, and he beheld, with terror, what he believed to be the apparition of his long-perished daughter.

Certainly, no spectre could have worn a more pallid or awful countenance—no glance from eyes that had once been mortal, could have shone with more supernatural lustre. The light of delirium and fever was there—and the wild, spiritual gleam, which looks out, in fitful spasms, from the hollow sockets of the dying. The glances of father and daughter met in the same in

stant, and what a life of mutual wo, and terror, and desolation, did they each convey!

A shriek from both was the result of that unlooked-for encounter. The light dropped from the hands of the dying girl, upon the bed, and was extinguished; the dagger fell harmlessly from his, beside the bosom it was meant to stab. Her hollow voice sounded in his ears, and the words she spoke confirmed all his terrors.

“My father! Oh! my father!” was the exclamation forced from her by the suddenly recovered memory of the painful past: and as he heard it, he darted away, in headlong flight, heedless of the body of Watson Gray, upon which, in his terrors, he trampled, without a consciousness of having done so.

The spectral form of the girl darted after him. He saw her white garments, as he bounded down the stair-flights, and the glimpse lent vigor to his limbs. He heard her voice, faint and feeble, like the moaning whisper of the dying breeze in autumn, imploring him to stay; and it sounded more terribly in his ears than the last trumpet. A painful consciousness of having, by his cruelty, driven the poor girl to the desperate deed of self-destruction, haunted his mind; and her appearance seemed to him that of one armed with all the terrors of the avenger. It will not be thought wonderful by those who are at all conversant with the nature of the human intellect, and with the strange spiritual touches that move it to and fro at will, to state that the effect of her father's presence had suddenly restored his daughter to her senses. At least, she knew that it was her father whom she pursued — she knew that he had spurned her from his presence, and her present consciousness led her to implore his forgiveness and to die. She knew that the hand of death was upon her, but she desired his forgiveness first. The knowledge of her situation gave her the requisite strength for the pursuit, and before her pathway could be traced, she had followed his steps into the neighboring forest.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE FATHER AND HIS CHILD.

CLARKSON, with all the terrors of superstitious fright pursuing him, yet with all the instinct of the scout, sought shelter in the woods from all pursuit, whether supernatural or human. He fled with the speed of the hunted deer, and had soon left far behind him the fainting form of his shadowy pursuer. But of this he knew nothing. He looked not once after him, upon leaving the house. Buried in the woods, he was still pressing his way forward, when a voice which, at another time, would have been familiar and friendly in his ears, addressed him, and summoned him to stop. But, under the prevailing apprehension of his heart, he fancied it the same voice of terror which had risen from the grave to rebuke him, and this conviction increased the terror and rapidity of his flight. A footstep as fleet as his own now joined in the pursuit. He heard the quick tread behind, and finally beside him, and, desperate with the feeling that he was overtaken, he turned wildly to confront his pursuer. A hand of flesh and blood was laid upon his shoulder at the same moment, and the voice of our old friend John Bannister reassured him, and reconciled him to delay.

“By Jings!” exclaimed the woodman, “if I didn’t know you to have the real grit in you, Jake Clarkson, I would think you was getting to be rather timorsome in your old age. What’s the matter, man?—what’s flung you so!”

“Ah, John! is that you?”—and the frightened man grappled the hand of the new-comer with fingers that were cold and clammy with the fears that were working in his heart.

“I reckon it is. I suppose you thought by this time, that Lord Rawdon and the Black Riders had made a breakfast upon me, keeping a chip of me, here and there, to stay their marching stomachs upon. But, you see there’s more ways than one of

slipping a halter, when a horse can borrow a friend's finger to help his teeth. The acorn ain't planted yet that's to make my swinging tree. I'm here, old man, and out of their clutches, I'm thinking, without losing any of my own hide, and bringing with me a very good sample of theirs. As keen a nag, Jake Clarkson, as ever was taken from the Philistines lies in that 'ere bog—a fifty guinea nag. I've spoiled the Egyptians in my captivity. Come and look at the critter."

"Ah, John, I'm so glad to see you. Stand by me—and look."

"Stand by you, and look! Why, what's to look upon?—what's to hurt you? What's scared you? The woods was never more quiet. I've been all round the barony, and their guard is half drunk and half asleep in an old log cabin between the stables and the negro houses. They can do no hurt, I tell you."

"Not them, John—you don't think I mind them? But, hear you! I've seen *her!*" His voice sunk to a hoarse whisper, and he looked behind him, over the path he came, with undiminished terrors.

"Her? Who? Who's *her?*"

"Mary! Poor Mary! The child I killed!—The poor child!"

"Ha!--She still lives then!"

"No! no!--her ghost. Her sperit! It walks! Oh! John Bannister--'twas a dreadful, dreadful sight. I went to kill Ned Conway. He's lying there, wounded in the house. I've been watching here in the woods, ever since the British went. I went several times into the house but couldn't get a chance at him till to-night. To-night, I got to his room. It was so dark I couldn't see how he lay in the bed; and when I was feeling for him, the curtain drawed up on one side, and then I saw Mary—poor Mary—whiter than the driven snow, all in a sudden blaze of light. Oh! how dreadful white she looked! How awful bright her eyes shone at me. I couldn't stand it; I couldn't look; and when she spoke to me, I felt all over choking. Jist then, it suddenly turned dark, and I run, and when I looked back she was coming after me. She didn't seem to run or

walk; she seemed to come with the air; and to fly between the trees——”

“What! you didn’t see her after you left the house, did you?”

“Yes! oh yes! She flew after me into the woods.”

The woodman struck his head with his palm, as, readily conceiving the true ground for Clarkson’s terrors, he thought of the wounded and dying girl in a paroxysm of delirium, flying into the rugged forest at midnight.

“Stay here, stay awhile, Jake, while I go!” said he.

“Don’t go—don’t leave me!” implored the old man. “It’s I that killed her, John, by my cruelty. I driv’ her away from the house, and she went mad and drowned herself in the Congaree; and she haunts me for it. She’s here near us now, watching for you to go. Don’t go, John; don’t leave me now. If you do, I’ll run to the river. I’ll drown myself after her.”

Bannister found some difficulty in soothing the superstitious terrors of the old man, but he at length succeeded in doing so in sufficient degree to persuade him to remain where he was, in waiting, till he went forward toward the mansion.

“I’ll whistle to you the old whistle,” said the woodman, “as I’m coming back. But don’t you be scared at anything you see. I’m sure there’s no ghost that ain’t a nateral one. I’ve never known the story of a ghost yet that it didn’t turn out to be a curtain in the wind, a white sheet hung out to dry, or nout be—sich things will scare some people—a large moss-beard hanging down upon a green oak’s branches. If a man’s to be scared by a ghost, Jake Clarkson, I give him up for a scout, or even for a soldier. He won’t do for the woods. There’s not an owl in an old tree that ain’t his master—there’s not a piece of rotten wood shining in the bottom, that ain’t a devil ready to run off with him. The squirrel that jumps in the bush, and the lizard that runs upon the dry leaves, is a little sort of ‘a coming-to-catch-me,’ for sich a person; and, God help him, if a pine-burr should drop on his head when he ain’t thinking. If his heart don’t jump out of his mouth, quicker than ever a green frog jumped out of a black snake’s hollow, then I’m no man to know anything about scouting. No, no! Jake Clarkson, t’wont

do for you that's been counted a strong man, who didn't fear the devil nor the tories, to be taking fright at a something that's more like a dream than anything serious. It's nothing but what's nateral that's scared you, I'm thinking, and jist you keep quiet till I go back and see. They can't scare me with their blue lights and burning eyes. My mother was a woman, with the soul of a man, that had the real grit in her. I was only scared once in my life, and then she licked the scare out of me, so complete that that one lickin'g's lasted me agin any scare that ever happened since."

"But my child—my poor child—the child that I killed, John Bannister," said the father in reproachful accents.

"Well, there's something in that, Jake Clarkson, I m willing to admit. When a man's done a wrong thing, if anything's right to scare him, it's that. But though you was cross, and too cross, as I told you, to poor Mary, yet it's not reasonable to think you killed her; and I'll lay my life on it, if you saw Mary Clarkson to-night, you saw the real Mary, and no make b'lieve—no ghost! But I'll go and see, and if there's any truth to be got at, trust me to pick it up somewhere along the track. Keep you quiet here, and mind to answer my whistle."

The woodman hurried away, without waiting to answer the inquiries of the unhappy father, whom the words of the former had led to new ideas. The suggestion, thrown out by Bannister, that Mary Clarkson might be yet alive, was intended by the scout to prepare the mind of the former for a probable meeting between himself and his child. He left him consequently in a singular state of impatient agitation, which was far more exhausting to the physical man, than would have been the encounter of a dozen foes in battle; and, with a feebleness which looked like one of the forms of paralysis, and had its effects for a time, the old man sank upon the ground at the foot of a tree, and groaned with the very pain of imbecility.

Bannister, meanwhile, took his way back in the direction of the mansion, and as nearly as possible along the route upon which he supposed his companion to have run. His judgment proved correct in this, as in most particulars. He had barely emerged from the thicker woods, and got upon the edge of the

immediate enclosure which circumscribed the area of the household, when his eye was caught by a white heap which lay within thirty yards of the woods. He approached it, and found it to be the object of his search.

The poor girl was stretched upon the ground immovable. The small degree of strength with which the momentary paroxysm had inspired her, had passed away, and she lay supine;—her eyes were opened and watching the woods to which her father had fled. Her hands were stretched outward in the same direction. Death was upon her, but the weight of his hand was not heavy, and his sting did not seem to be felt. A slight moaning sound escaped her lips, but it was rather the utterance of the parting breath than of any sensation of pain which she experienced. John Bannister knelt down beside her. The stout man once more found himself a boy.

“This then,” was the thought which filled his brain—“this then, is the sweet little girl whom I once loved so much!”

She knew him. A faint smile covered her features, and almost the last effort of her strength, enabled her to point to the woods, and to exclaim:—

“My father! my father!—There! Bear me to him, John.”

The hand fell suddenly, the voice was silent, the lips were closed. A shiver shook the limbs of the strong man.

“Mary! Mary!” he called huskily.

Her eyes unclosed. She was not dead. There was still life, and there might be time to place her in the arms of her father before it was utterly gone. A noise in the direction of the mansion, and the appearance of lights in the avenue, determined the prompt woodman. He wound his arms tenderly about her, raised her to his bosom, laid her head on his shoulder, and as if she had been a mere infant in his grasp, darted forward into the cover of the woods. The alarm had evidently been given at the mansion, he heard the voices of the household, and the sudden clamors of the half-sober and half-sleeping soldiery. But he defied pursuit and search, as, bounding off, in the well-known route, he soon placed his burden at the foot of her father.

“Here, Clarkson, here is your daughter. Here is poor Mary

She was not drowned. She lives, Jake Clarkson, but she has not long to live. She's going fast. Be quick—look at her, and talk softly!”

Clarkson bounded to his feet, gazed with convulsive tremors upon the pale, silent form before him, then, with the shriek of a most miserable joy, he clasped her in his arms. Her eyes opened upon him. He held her from him that he might the better meet their gaze. She smiled, threw herself forward upon his breast, and was buried within his embrace. In a wild incoherent speech, of mixed tenderness and reproach, he poured forth the emotions of his heart—the pangs of years—the pleasures of the moment—the chiding of his own cruelty, and her misdeeds. But she answered nothing—she heard nothing. Neither praise nor blame could touch or penetrate the dull, cold ear of death. She was, at length, at rest.

“Speak to me, dear Mary. Only tell me that you forgive me all, as John Bannister can tell you I have forgiven you.”

“She will never speak again, Jacob. It's all over. She's got rid of the pain, and the trouble, and the vexation of this life; and I reckon she'll have no more in the next; for God knows, jist as well as I, that she's had a great deal more than her share.”

“You don't say she's dead?” said Clarkson huskily.

“Well, except for the pain of it, she's been dead a long time, Jacob. But she don't hear you, I reckon, and she don't feel your arms, though you hold her so close to you. Give her to me, Jacob, that I may carry her deeper into the bay. The lights from the house are coming close, and they may find us here.”

“Let 'em come!—who cares? They won't want her now she's dead!”

“No; but they may want *us*, Jacob.”

“Let them want, and let them seek! We're ready! We'll fight, I reckon!” and his fingers were clutched together convulsively, as if the weapon were still within their grasp.

“Yes, we'll fight,” said Bannister, “but not here, and not till we put her out of the way. 'Twon't be right to fight anybody where she is—not in her presence, as I may say.”

“True, true.” replied the other faintly; “but *I’ll* carry her, John.”

Bannister did not object, but led the way to the thicket, while the father followed with his burden. There, the woodman drew forth his matchbox and struck a light, and the two sat down to survey the pale spiritual features of one who had certainly held a deep place in the affections of both. It was a curious survey. Their place of retreat was one of those dense sombre masses of the forest where, even in midday, the wholesome daylight never thoroughly came. The demi-obscure alone—

“The little glooming light most like a shade,”

declared the meridian hour; while at midnight the place was dark as Erebus. The broad circumferences of oaks, the lofty stretch of ever-moaning pines, gathered close and solemnly around as if in secret council; while vines and leaves, massed together in the intervals above, effectually roofed in the spot with a dread cathedral vastness and magnificence. The spot had been freely used before by the outlyers, and more than one comfortable bed of dried leaves might be discovered under the oaks.

On one of these the body of the girl was laid. A few paces distant from her feet, in a depression of the earth, John Bannister had gathered his splinters and kindled a little fire, just sufficient to enable them to behold one another, and perhaps make them more than ever feel the deep and gloomy density of the place. The adjuncts of the scene were all calculated to make them feel its sadness. No fitter spot could have been chosen for gloomy thoughts; none which could more completely harmonize with the pallid presence of the dead. The head of the girl rested in the lap of the father. John Bannister sat behind the old man. A sense of delicacy made him reserved. He did not wish to obtrude at such a moment.

Years had elapsed since the father had been persuaded that his child had been lost to him, irrevocably, by death; and this conviction was embittered by the further belief that his own violence had driven her to a desperate end. In that conviction, deep, and keen, and bitter, were the pangs of his soul;—pangs which he could only blunt by the endeavor, hitherto futile. ❧



finding, and inflicting vengeance upon, her betrayer. Dark had been his soul, darker its desires and designs. At length he finds her alive, whom he had fancied he had destroyed. He finds her living, only to see her die. His thoughts may be conjectured, not traced, nor described, as he watched the pale countenance, still beautiful, which lay before him in the immoveable ice of death. He watched her long in silence. Not a word was spoken by himself; and John Bannister felt too sincerely, on his own account, for idle and unnecessary remark. But the stifled nature at length broke its bonds. The heart of the father heaved with the accumulating emotions. Deep groans burst from his lips, and a sudden flood of relieving tears gushed from his eyes. Bannister felt easier as he perceived the change.

“All’s for the best,” said he, with a plain homespun effort at consolation. “It’s best that she’s gone, Jake Clarkson; and you see God spared her jest long enough to bring you together that you might exchange pardon. You was a little rough and she was a little rash, and God, he knows, you’ve both had mighty had roughing for it ever since. Poor thing, she’s gone to heaven, that’s clear enough to me. I’m not jub’ous about it. She’s been a sinner like the best, but if she wa’n’t sorry for it, from the bottom of her heart, then sinner never was sorry. Poor Mary, if she hadn’t looked a little too high, she wouldn’t ha’ fallen so low. She’d ha’ been an honest man’s wife; but what’s the use to talk of that now. It only makes one’s eyes water the more.”

“It’s good, John. It sort o’ softens a man!”

“Not too much. A man oughtn’t to be too soft about the heart, in a world like this, so full of rascals that need the knockings of a hard and heavy hand. Yet, ef a man ought to feel soft about the heart, jest now, that man’s me. It’s a sad truth, Jake, I was once jist on the point of axing you and Mary! I was; for I *did* love her, as I ha’n’t seen woman to love from that day to this; and but for Edward Conway!——”

“That bloody villain! That thief—that murderer! Ha! ha! But I will have him yet, John Bannister! I was a fool to be frightened away, jist when I had my hand at his throat, and nothing to stop me. There he lay, still and ready for the knife!

Ho! John, jist there! I think I see him now! Stretched out, his eyes shut, his breast open, and nobody looking on——”

“Stop, Jacob Clarkson, God was a-looking on all the time—and Mary Clarkson was a looking on?—and what sent her thar jest at that moment? Who but God! And what did he send her thar for, but to stop you from doing a wrong thing? Look you, Jake Clarkson, you know I don’t often stop to think or to feel when fighting’s going on. I’m as quick to kill as the quickest dragoon in all Tarleton’s brigade. That is, I’m quick to kill when it’s the time for killing. But there’s a time for all things, and I ain’t quick to kill a man that’s a-sleeping, and him too, so cut up already, that it’s a chance ef he ain’t got enough to bury him. I’m a-thinking, Jacob Clarkson, that God has jest given you a good warning, that you must do your killing in fair fight, and not by stealing to a man’s bedside when he’s sleeping, and he pretty well chopped up already. I reckon you’ll be the man to kill Ned Conway yet, ef what he’s got don’t finish him; and ef it does, you’re only to thank God for taking an ugly business off your hands. When I look upon Mary, thar, it puts me out of the idea of killing altogether. I’m sure I wish peace was everywhere. Lord save us from a time like this, when a poor child like that runs into the way of hard blows and bloody we’pons. It makes my heart sort o’ wither up within me only to think of it.”

But Clarkson was not much impressed by the grave opinions of his companion. He had always respected the straightforward character and manly judgment of the woodman; and there was something very plausible, to the superstitious mind, in the case presented at the outset of the woodman’s speech.

“Sure enough! sure enough!” said the old man; “how could she come, jest at the moment I was going to kill him, if God didn’t mean that I shouldn’t do it jest then! But if he gets well again, John Bannister——”

“Kill him then—I’m cl’ar for that! I’ll kill him myself then ef nobody comes before me with a better right. You’ve got a sort of claim to the preference.”

We need not pursue the conference. One question which went to the very heart of John Bannister, and which he evaded,

was uttered by the father, as, in passing his hands through the unbound portions of her hair, he felt them clammy with her blood. The revelation of her physical injuries was new to him.

"Oh, God, John Bannister! she bleeds! Her head is hurt. Here! jest here! I didn't mind the bandage before. She didn't die a natural death. The cruel villain has killed her. He's got tired of her and killed her."

"Oh, no! no! Jacob!" exclaimed the other, with an agitation of voice and manner which betrayed his secret pangs. "No, I reckon not! He's not able to hurt anybody. I reckon—I'm sure—she got hurt by accident. I'll answer for it, the man that struck Mary Clarkson, would have sooner cut his right hand off than ha' done such a thing. 'Twas accident! I'm sure 'twas accident!"—and with these words the poor fellow went aside among the trees and wept like a child as he thought over the cruel haste of his own fierce spirit and too heavy hand.

"God forgive me, for not speaking out the truth, which is a sort of lie-telling after all. But how could I tell Jake Clarkson that 'twas the hand of John Bannister that shed the blood of his child? It's woful enough to feel it."

To bury the dead from his sight became the last duty of the father. John Bannister was for carrying the body to the family vault of the Middleton's and laying it there by dawn of day. But to this Clarkson instantly dissented.

"No," said he; "the Middletons are great people, and the Clarksons are poor and mean. We never mixed with 'em in life, and there's no reason we should mix in death."

"But you don't know Miss Flora, Jacob Clarkson."

"I don't want to know her."

"She's so good. She'd be glad, I'm sure, if we was to put her there. She's been tending poor Mary as if she was her own sister."

"She has, eh? I thank her. I believe she's good as you say, John. But, somebody might come after her, and shut me out of the vault when they please. They wouldn't like me to go there to see Mary when I wish, and wouldn't let 'em put me beside her. No! no! we'll put her in the ground beside the river. I know a place for her already, and there's room for me

She was born in the Congaree, and she'll sleep sweetly beside it. If you live after me, John, put me there with her. It's a little smooth hill that always looks fresh with grass, as if God smiled upon the spot and a good angel 'lighted there in the night-time. Go, John, and try and find a shovel in the fields somewhere. We've got no coffin, but we'll wrap the child up in pine bark and moss, and she won't feel it any colder. Go, and let me sit down with her by ourselves. It's a long time, you know, since I talked with her, and then I talked cross and harsh. I'll say nothing to vex her now. Go, get the shovel, if you can, and when you come back, we'll take her, and I'll show you where to dig. By that time we'll have day to help us."

Bannister departed without a word, and left the father with his dead. We will not intrude upon his sorrows; but, when the whole history of the humble pair is considered, no sight could be more mournful than to behold the two—there, in that lonely and darksome maze of forest—at midnight—the flickering firelight cast upon the pallid features, almost transparent, of the fair, dead girl, while the father looked on, and talked, and wept, as if his tears could be seen, and his excuses and self-reproaches heard, by the poor child that had loved so warmly, and had been so hardly dealt with by all whom she had ever loved. Conway had ruined her peace and happiness; her father had driven her from her home; and he, who had never wilfully meant, or said, her wrong, had inflicted the fatal blow which had deprived her of life—perhaps, the stroke of mercy and relief to a crushed and wounded spirit such as hers! Truly, there was the hand of a fate in this—that fate that surely follows the sad lapses of the wilful heart! Hers was rather weak than wilful; but weakness is more commonly the cause of vice than wilfulness; and firmness is one of those moral securities, of inappreciable value, without which there is little virtue.

CHAPTER XXXI.

AN INTERVIEW BETWEEN THE TWO SCOUTS.

MEANWHILE, the alarm had been given at Brier Park, and the whole house was in commotion. Watson Gray was the first to stumble up, and into consciousness, upon the flight of Mary Clarkson; simply because he had been fortunate enough to feel the full force of the flying footsteps of her father. But several moments had elapsed after her departure, before the discovery of the fact was made, and the pursuit, which was then offered, appears to have taken a wrong direction. Certainly, they did not find the place of her concealment, nor the traces of her flight.

Yet no pains were spared to do so. The circumstances were mysterious and exciting;—to Flora Middleton, particularly so. She reproached herself, though, certainly without justice, for having left the poor girl in the custody of a drowsy servant; and her self-chidings were by no means lessened when the minds of all at the barony appeared to settle down in the belief that, in her delirium, the poor girl had wandered off to the river banks and cast herself into its waters. Thus, a second time, was the innocent Congaree made to bear the reproach of participating in, and promoting, the destruction of the same unhappy life.

In the chamber of the outlaw, the feelings, if less solemn and tender, were surely not less grave and serious. To Watson Gray, the mere death of the poor victim of his confederate, would have been of very small importance. Perhaps, indeed, he would have felt that it was a benefit—a large step gained toward the more perfect freedom of his principal. But there were some circumstances that compelled his apprehensions. Who had been in the chamber? What heavy feet were they

that trampled upon him?—and why was that strange and formidable knife resting beside the person of the outlaw?

That somebody, from the apartment of Mary Clarkson, had been in that of Edward Conway, was soon apparent from the discovery of the little lamp which the former had carried, and which had fallen from her hands upon the couch of the latter, in the moment when she saw her father's face. This had been recognised by the servants, and the fact made known in the confusion of the search. But, though Gray felt certain that Mary had been in the room, he felt equally certain that there had been another also. It was possible that, in her delirium, the poor girl may have carried the knife as well as the light, and that she may have meditated the death of her betrayer:—all *that* was natural enough; but Gray felt sure that a heavier foot had trampled upon his neck and breast.

Naturally of a suspicious temper, his fears were confirmed, when, issuing from the house at the first alarm, he found his guards either withdrawn, or straggling toward their posts in almost helpless inebriety. Their condition led him to recall the story of the surgeon. The description which the latter gave of the stranger who had penetrated to the breakfast-room—his garments of blue homespun, and the huge knife which he carried—tended, in considerable degree, to enlighten him on the subject. He called the attention of the surgeon to the knife which had been found on the bed, and the latter, so far confirmed the identity of it with the one which the supposed ghost was seen to carry, as to say that the one was equally large of size with the other; but the former was incomparably more bright. He handled, with exceeding caution, the dark and dingy instrument, and re-delivered it, with fingers that seemed glad to be relieved from the unpleasant contact.

Seeing the surprise of the scout at such seeming apprehension, he began a long discourse about contagion, infection, and the instinctive dread which he had of all cutaneous disorders; to all of which Gray turned a deaf ear, and a wandering eye. The outlaw had been awakened by the unavoidable noise of the search, and had heard with some surprise and interest the circumstances which were detailed to him by Gray.

“How strange!” he exclaimed. “Do you know I had the sweetest sleep, in which I dreamed that Mary and myself were walking over the old rice-dam on the Santee, and I began to feel for her just as I felt then, when I first knew her, and she seemed twice as lovely, and twice as intelligent. How strange!”

Gray had judiciously suppressed some of the circumstances connected with the events of the evening. He had concealed the knife entirely, and forbore stating to him, as well as to everybody else, everything which related to the supposed intrusion of some stranger into the household.

“You have found her, Gray?” said the outlaw, when the former returned from the search.

“No! she is nowhere in the grounds.”

“Indeed! could she have wandered to the river?”

“That is what they all think.”

“But you?”

“I know not what to think.”

“Why should you not think with them?”

“I should, but she did not seem to me to have strength enough for that. The river is a mile off; and she was evidently sinking fast when I saw her this evening.”

“Where, then, do you think her?”

“Somewhere at hand. In some outhouse, or some hole or corner—or, possibly, in some ditch, or close nest of bushes, where we can’t find her by night.”

“Good God! and she has probably perished there—and thus!”

Gray was silent, and the outlaw felt the returning pangs of that remorse which most probably would have remained unfelt, except during the present period of his own inability.

“Poor, poor Mary. I would, Gray, that I could live over some things—some moments—of the past!”

“Do not let it afflict you so much. It can’t be helped, and these things are common enough.”

Ay, common enough, indeed. Nothing more common than human misery. Nothing more common than the human guilt which causes it. And how coolly do we urge the commonness of both, by way of reconciling our souls to their recurrence:

The philosophy of Watson Gray is, unhappily, of a very common description.

"Yes, yes. But such a catastrophe! You have been looking for her?"

"Yes, for the last two hours."

"But you will go again. You must, Gray."

"With the daylight, I intend to do so."

"That's well. See to her, for God's sake, Gray, and if she lives, let her last moments be easy. If all's over, see her carefully buried . . . It's an ugly business. Would I were free of *that*! I know not any blood that I would sooner wish to wash from my hands than hers."

"That should be the wish of Clarence Conway, not yours," said Gray, taking the literal sense of the outlaw's expression.

"Ah, Gray, the blow, the mere blow, is a small matter. If I were free from the rest, I think nothing more would trouble me. The last drop ran the cup over—but who filled it to the brim? who drugged it with misery? who made the poor wretch drink it, persuading her that it was sweet and pure? Ah, Gray, I fear I have been a bad fellow, and if there were another world hereafter—a world of punishments and rewards!"—

"Your situation would be then changed, perhaps," was the brutal sneer of Gray, "and every privilege which you had in this life would then be given up to her. Perhaps you'd better sleep, captain; sickness and want of sleep are not good helps to a reasonable way of thinking."

"Gray, I suspect you're a worse fellow than myself," responded the outlaw, with a feeble effort at a laugh. "Ten to one, the women have more to complain of at your hands than they ever had at mine."

"I don't know. Perhaps. But I think not. The little I know of them makes me fancy that they're a sort of plaything for grown people. As long as they amuse, well and good, and when they cease to do so, the sooner you get rid of them the better. When I was a young man, I thought differently. That is, I didn't think at all. I had a faith in love. I had a similar faith in sweetmeats and sugar-plums. I liked girls and confectionery; and—perhaps you never knew the fact before—I

married one young woman, not very much unlike your Mary Clarkson'

"The devil you did!" exclaimed the outlaw.

"The devil I did marry!" returned the other, gravely. "You speak the very words of truth and soberness. She proved worse than a devil to me. I trusted her like a fool, as I was, and she abused me. She ran off with my best horse, in company with an Indian trader, whom I took into my cabin, fed and physicked. He seized the first opportunity, after he got well, to empty my house, and relieve it of some of its troubles. But I didn't see the matter in its true light. I wasn't thankful. I gave chase, and got my horse back—that was everything, perhaps—just after they had left Augusta."

"And you let the woman go, eh?"

"I left her with him, where I found them; and they liked the spot so well, that I think any curious body that would seek might find them there to this day. I have some reason to believe that she has been more quiet with him than she ever was with me. I don't believe they ever quarrelled, and when she was my wife we were at it constantly."

"You're a famous fellow, Gray!" exclaimed the outlaw, as he listened to a narrative of crime which was only remarkable, perhaps, from the coolness with which the chief actor related it.

"No, captain, not famous. To be famous is about the last thing that I desire; and I'm thinking you don't much care about it. But you'd better sleep now. Take all the rest you can, and don't mind anything you hear. You'll want all your strength and sense, as soon as you can get it, if you wish to get what you aim at."

"No doubt: I'll do as you counsel. But see after the poor girl by daylight."

"Yes, yes! we'll take all the care that's needful," was the response.

To stifle the remorse of his superior, Gray had taken a way of his own, and one that was most successful. The cold sneer is, of all other modes, the most effectual in influencing the mind which does not receive its laws from well-grounded principles. How many good purposes have been parried by a sneer! How

many clever minds have faltered in a noble aim by the sarcasm of the witling and the worldling! How difficult is it for the young to withstand the curling lip, and the malignant half-smile of the audacious and the vain! Gray knew his man; and, in his narration, he had probably shown a degree of contumelious indifference to the character of woman, and the ties of love, which he did not altogether feel. It served his turn, and this was all that he desired of any agent at any time. He turned from gazing on the outlaw, with such a smile as showed, however he might be disposed to toil in his behalf, he was still able to perceive, and to despise, what seemed to him to be the weakness of the latter.

Leaving the chamber, he descended to the area in front of the dwelling, and drew together, without noise, the file of soldiers that had been left with him by Rawdon. These were now tolerably sobered; and, having taken pains to see that their arms were in good condition,—for it may be said here that the smallest part of Gray's purpose and care was to find the girl whom it was his avowed object to seek,—he led them forth into the adjoining thicket about an hour before the dawn of day.

Of the reputation of Gray as a woodsman we have been already more than once informed, and the suspicions which he entertained were such as to make him address all his capacity to the contemplated search. His little squad were cautioned with respect to every movement; and, divided into three parties of four men each, were sent forward to certain points, with the view to a corresponding advance of all, at the same moment, upon such portions of the woods as seemed most likely to harbor an enemy. Spreading themselves so as to cover the greatest extent of surface, yet not be so remote from each other as to prevent co-operation, they went forward under the circumspect conduct of their leader, with sure steps, and eyes that left no suspicious spot unexamined on their route.

The day was just begun. The sun, rising through the dim vapory haze that usually hangs about him at the beginning of his pathway in early summer, shed a soft, faint beauty upon a gentle headland that jutted out upon the Congaree, and com-

pelled its currents to turn aside from the direct route, making a sweep around it, most like the curve of a crescent. Some thirty steps in the background was a clump of massive trees, the principal of which were oak and hickory. They grew around one eminent pine that stood alone of all its species, as it was alone in its height and majesty. At the foot of this tree, and under the cathedral shelter of the oaks, John Bannister was busy in throwing out the earth for the spot chosen by Clarkson for his daughter's grave. The father sat at a little distance in the background, his child's head lying in his lap. The labors of Bannister had been severe, and he would not suffer the old man to assist him. The earth was rigid, and the innumerable roots of the contiguous trees traversed, in every direction, the spot chosen for the grave. Fortunately the stout woodsman had secured an axe as well as a shovel, and the vigor of his arm at length succeeded in the necessary excavation.

To remedy, as far as he might, the want of a coffin, the worthy fellow had stripped the rails from the neighboring fences, and he now proceeded to line, with them, the bottom and sides of the grave. These were in turn lined with pine bark and green moss, and the couch of death was spread with as much care and tenderness, under the cheerless circumstances, as if wealth had brought its best offerings, and art had yielded its most ingenious toils in compliance with the requisitions of worldly vanity.

Bannister was yet in the grave, making these dispositions, when Watson Gray, with his soldiers, advanced upon the party. To old Clarkson the task had been assigned of keeping watch. It was physically impossible that Bannister should do so while deep buried and toiling in the earth. The old man was too much absorbed in contemplating the pale features of his child, and too full of the strife within his heart, to heed the dangers from without; and so cautious had been the approach of Gray and his party, that they were upon the sufferer before he could rise from his feet or make the slightest effort to relieve himself from his burthen.

It was fortunate for Bannister that, being in the grave and stooping at the time, he was below the surface of the earth, and remained unseen at the time when Clarkson was taken. But,

hearing strange voices, he immediately conjectured the approach of enemies, and cautiously peering above the grave, beheld at a glance the danger which threatened him. He saw Watson Gray, conspicuous, and standing directly above the person of Clarkson, whose daughter's head still lay in his lap. One of his hands was pressed upon her bosom, as if he felt some apprehension that she would be taken from him. On either hand of Gray he beheld a group of soldiers, and a glance still further, to the right and left, showed that they were so placed as to present themselves on every side between him and the forest. His flight seemed entirely cut off. But the coolness and courage of the woodman did not leave him in the emergency. He had already resolved upon his course, and rising rapidly to the surface, he became visible to his enemies. The voice of Watson Gray was heard at the same instant, calling to him to surrender.

“Good quarter, Supple Jack!—be quiet and take it. You can't get off. You're surrounded.”

The tone of exultation in which the rival scout addressed him, made it a point of honor with Bannister to reject his offer, even if he had no reason to suppose that the assurance of safety meant nothing. He well knew, in those days, what the value of such an assurance was; for Tarleton, Rawdon, and Cornwallis, had long since shown themselves singularly reckless of all pledges made to “the poor bodies who were out” in the rebellion of '76.

“Make terms when you've got me, Watson Gray,” was the scornful answer of the scout. “The only quarters I ax for is my own, and I'll save them when I've got 'em.”

“If you run, I shoot!” cried Gray threateningly. “Look; my men are all around you.”

“I reckon then I'll find 'em in the bottom of the Congaree;” was the fearless answer, as the scout leaped for the river bank with the speed of an antelope.

“Shoot!” cried Gray—“Shoot him as he runs! Fire! Fire!”

The volleys rang on every side, but the fugitive remained erect. He had reached the river bank. He seemed unhurt. His enemies pressed forward in pursuit; and the scout clapping

his open palms together above his head, plunged boldly into the stream, and disappeared from sight.

Bannister could swim like an otter, and with head under water almost as long. But once he rose to breathe, and his enemies, who waited for his re-appearance with muskets cocked, now threw away their fire in the haste with which they strove to take advantage of his rising. When he next became visible, he was on the opposite shore, and bade them defiance. A bitter laugh answered to their shout as he turned away slowly and reluctantly, and disappeared in the distant thickets.

Gray had lost his prey a second time, and he turned, with no good humor, to the prisoner with whom he had been more successful.

“Who are you—what’s your name?”

“Jacob Clarkson!”

“Ha! you are then the father of this girl?”

“Yes!” was the sad reply of the old man, as his head sank upon his breast.

“Do you know this knife?” demanded Gray, showing the knife which had been found at the bedside of Morton.

“It is mine.”

“Where did you lose, or leave it?”

“I know not. I dropped it somewhere last night.”

“Where—at the house of Mrs. Middleton?”

“It may be—I was there!”

“You were in the chamber of Captain Morton!”

“Not that I know on,” was the reply.

“Beware! You cannot deceive me. You stood beside his bed. You went there to murder him. Confess the truth:—did you not?”

“No!” cried the old man, starting to his feet. “I did go there to murder a man, but God forbid it. I couldn’t, though he was laying there before me. She come between. She made me stop, or I’d ha’ killed him in another moment. But it was Edward Conway that I would have killed. I know nothing about Captain Morton.”

“Ha! I see it. Hither, Sergeant Bozman. Tie this fellow’s hands behind him.”

“Hands off!” cried the old man, with a sudden show of *figh*. —“Hands off, I tell you! I must first put her in the ground.”

“Give yourself no trouble about that. We’ll see it done,” said Gray.

“I must see it too,” said the old man resolutely.

The resolution he expressed would have been idle enough had Gray been disposed to enforce his wishes; but a few moments’ reflection induced him, as no evil consequence could possibly ensue from the indulgence, to yield in this respect to the prisoner.

“The old rascal!” he exclaimed—“let him stay. It’s perhaps only natural that he should wish to see it; and as they have got the grave ready, put her in at once.”

“Stay!” said the father, as they were about to lift the body. “Stay!—only for a minute!” and while the soldiers, more indulgent perhaps than their leader, gave back at his solicitation, the father sank to the ground beside her, and the tones of his muttered farewell, mingled with his prayer—though the words were undistinguishable—were yet audible to the bystanders.

“Now, I’m ready,” said he, rising to his feet. “Lay her down, and you may tie me as soon after as you please.”

The burial was shortly over. No other prayer was said. Old Clarkson watched the sullen ceremonial to its completion, and was finally, without struggle or sign of discontent, borne away a prisoner by his inflexible captor.

CHAPTER XXXII.

GLIMPSSES OF COMING EVENTS.

THE outlaw did not hear of Mary Clarkson's death without some emotion; but the duration of his remorse was short. He soon shook himself free from its annoyances, and in a week more it was forgotten. Of the arrest of old Clarkson, his own previous danger from the hands of the latter, and several other details, connected with his proceedings, Watson Gray did not suffer his principal to know anything. His main object was to get his patient up and on his legs again, foreseeing that a time was approaching, when a sick bed could be no security for either of them in a region to be so shortly winnowed with the sword of an enemy. His scouts occasionally arrived, bringing him reports of the condition of the country: of the prospects of Rawdon's army, and of the several smaller bodies under Greene, Sumter, Marion, and Pickens.

These reports counselled him to make all speed. He did not press the outlaw with the intelligence which he thus obtained, for fear that their tendency might be to increase his anxiety, and discourage rather than promote his cure. To this one object, his own anxious efforts were given, without stint or interruption, and every precaution was taken, and every measure adopted by which the recovery of his patient might be effected. No nurse could have been more devoted, no physician more circumspect, no guardian more watchful. The late attempts of Clarkson had given him a mean opinion of the regulars who had been left to take care of the barony; and to watch *them* was the most irksome, yet necessary duty, which he had undertaken. But he went to his tasks cheerfully, and, with this spirit, a strong man may almost achieve anything.

The tidings which were sometimes permitted to reach the ears of Flora Middleton, were of no inconsiderable interest to that

maiden She heard frequently of Clarence Conway, and always favorably. Now he was harassing the Tories on the upper Saluda, and now driving them before him into the meshes of Pickens among the Unacaya mountains. The last tidings in respect to him which reached her ears, were also made known to Watson Gray by one of his runners; and were of more particular importance to both of them than they were then fully aware of. It was reported that a severe fight had taken place between Conway's Blues and the Black Riders. The latter were beguiled into an ambush which Conway had devised, after the ordinary Indian fashion, in the form of a triangle, in which twenty-three of the Black Riders were sabred, and the rest dispersed. Gray did not greatly regret this disaster. He was now anxious to be free of the connection, and, perhaps, he conceived this mode of getting rid of them, to be quite as eligible, and, certainly, as effectual as any other.

"That fellow, Stockton, with his sly second, Darcy, are the only chaps that might trouble us. They suspect us; they know something, perhaps; and if Conway has only cut *them* up, along with the twenty-three, we shall count him as good an ally as the best."

Such was his only reflection as he communicated this news to the outlaw, his principal.

"Ay," replied the latter, "but why was there no lucky bullet to reward the conqueror. That hopeful brother of mine seems to own a charmed life, indeed. I know that he goes into the thick of it always, yet he seldom gets even his whiskers singed. The devil takes care of him surely. He has proper friends in that quarter."

"We needn't care for him, captain, so long as Rawdon lies between us. If you were only up now, and able, we could whip off the lady, and every hair of a negro, and take shipping before they could say Jack Robinson, or guess what we are driving at."

"Ay, if I were only up!" groaned the outlaw writhing upon his couch. "But that 'if' is the all and everything."

"But you are better. You are much stronger. I think this last week has done wonders for you; and, but for the weakness,

and the gashes in your face—" The speaker paused without finishing the sentence.

"Very comely, no doubt: they will strike a lady favorably, eh? Do you not think they improve my looks wonderfully?"

There was something of bitterness in the affected indifference with which the outlaw made this comment. The other made no reply, and did not appear to heed the tone of complaint.

"Give me the glass, Gray," continued the outlaw.

He was obeyed; the mirror was put into his hands, and he subjected his visage to a long scrutiny.

"Nothing so shocking, after all. My mouth is something enlarged, but that will improve my musical ability. I shall be better able to sing 'Hail Britannia,' in his majesty's island of Jamaica, or the 'Still vex'd Bermoothes,' to one or other of which places we must make our way. Besides, for the look of the thing, what need I care? I shall be no longer in the market; and my wife is in duty bound to think me comely. Eh, what say you, Gray?"

"Yes, surely; and Miss Middleton don't seem to be one to care much about a body's looks."

"Don't you believe it, Gray. She's a woman like the rest; and they go by looks. Smooth flowing locks, big, bushy whiskers, and a bold, death-defying face will do much among a regiment of women. I've known many a sensible woman—sensible I mean for the sex—seek a fool simply because he was an ass so monstrous as to be unapproachable by any other, and was, therefore, the fashion. The ugliness is by no means an objection, provided it be of a terrible sort. I don't know but that success at first is as likely to attend the hideous as the handsome; that is, if it be coupled with a good wit and a rare audacity."

"The notion is encouraging, certainly; and I reckon there's something in it—though I never thought of it before."

"There is! It is a truth founded upon a first experience of the woman heart. Beauty and the Beast is a frequent alliance."

"I reckon that was the secret of the snake getting the better of Mother Eve in the garden."

"Yes: the snake was as bold and subtle as he was ugly. The

boldness and subtleness, reconciled the woman to the beast; and once reconciled, to behold without loathing, she soon discovered a beauty in his very ugliness. If not handsome, therefore, but hideous; if you wish to succeed with woman:—the more hideous (the wit and audacity not being wanting) the more likely to be successful. The game were quite sure if, to the wit and boldness, you could add some social distinctions—wealth or nobility for example. A title, itself, is a thing of very great beauty. Now were I a lord or baronet—a count or marquis—you might slash my cheeks with half a score more of such gashes as these, and they would, in no degree, affect my fortune with the fair. In that is my hope. I must buy a title as soon as I have my prize, and then all objections will disappear. Still, I could have wished that that d—d spiteful brother of mine had subjected me to no such necessity. He might have slashed hip or thigh, and gratified himself quite as much in those quarters."

"Let us carry out our project, and you have your revenge!"

"Ay, and there's consolation in that for worse hurts than these. But hear you nothing yet from below? What from Pete? If the boats fail us at the proper time, we shall be in an ugly fix."

"They will not fail us. Everything now depends on you. If you can stir when the time comes——"

"Stir—I can stir now. I mean to try my limbs before the week's out, for, as the fair Flora forbears to come and see me, I shall certainly make an effort to go and see her. Has the poison touched, think you? Does she feel it—does she believe it?"

The cutlaw referred to the slander which Gray had insinuated against Clarence Conway.

"No doubt. She's so proud that there's no telling where it hurts her, and she'll never tell herself; but I know from the flashing of her eye, after I said what I did about Colonel Conway and Mary Clarkson, that she believed and felt it. Besides captain, I must tell you, that she's asked after you more kindly and more frequently of late. She always asks."

"Ha! that's a good sign; well?"

"I said you were more unhappy than sick. That you'd got

over the body hurts, I had no doubt. But then, I told her what an awful thing to fight with one's brother, and how much you felt *that!*"

"Ha! Well, and then?"

"She sighed, but said nothing more, and soon after went out of the room."

"Good seed, well planted. I shall cultivate the plant carefully. I fancy I can manage that."

"Psho!—Here's the surgeon," said Gray, interrupting him with a whisper, as Mr. Hillhouse appeared at the entrance.

The surgeon had forgotten, or forgiven, the slight to which his patient had previously subjected him. He was not a person to remember any circumstance which might be likely to disparage him in his own esteem. Besides, his head was now running upon a project which made him disposed to smile upon all mankind. We will allow him to explain his own fancies.

"Mr. Conway, good morning. I trust you feel better. Nay, I see you do. Your eyes show it, and your color is warming;—a sign that your blood is beginning to circulate equally through your system. Suffer me to examine your pulse."

"I feel better, sir, stronger. I trust to get fairly out of my lair in a week. I shall make a desperate attempt to do so."

"You *are* better, sir; but do nothing rashly. A week may produce great results. There are but seven days in a week, Mr Conway—but a poor seven days—yet how many events—how many fates—how many deeds of good and evil, lie in that space of time. Ah! I have reason to say this from the bottom of my heart. A week here, sir, at this barony, has changed the whole aspect of my life." A sigh followed this speech.

"Indeed! And how so, pray!"

"You see in me, Mr. Conway, a man who has lived a great deal in a short space of time. In the language of the ancient poet—Ovid, it is—my life is to be told by events, and not by lingering years. It is a book crowded with events. I have passed through all the vicissitudes of a long life in Europe, India, and America. I have ate and drank, marched and fought—played the man of pleasure and the man of business—stood in my friend's grave, and often at the edge of my own;—saved

life, taken life; and practised, suffered, and enjoyed, all things, and thoughts, and performances, which are usually only to be known to various men in various situations. But, sir, one humbling accident—the trying event, which usually occurs to every other man at an early period of his life, has hitherto, by the special favor of a benign providence, been withheld from mine!”

“Ah, sir, and what may that be?” demanded the outlaw.

“I have never loved, sir—till now. Never known the pang, and the prostration—the hope and the fear—the doubt and the desire—till the fates cast me upon the banks of the Congaree! Melancholy conviction! that he who has survived the charms of Europe and India—who has passed through the temptations of the noble and the beautiful, the wealthy and the vain, of those beguiling regions—should here be overtaken and overcome by the enemy in the wild woods of America.”

“Indeed! It is indeed a most dreadful catastrophe! Gray, hand the doctor a chair, a glass of water, and if you have any Jamaica——”

“No, no!—I thank you, no!—I will take the chair only.”

“And pray, sir,” said the outlaw with a mock interest in the subject—“when did you suffer from the first attack, and who do you suspect of bewitching you?”

“Suspect of bewitching me!—a good phrase that!—I like it. My suspicions, sir, as well as yours, should naturally be strong that I am the victim of a sort of witchcraft; for, how else should a man fall so suddenly and strangely in a strange land, who has stood unshaken by such affections, through such a life as mine?”

“Very true! a very natural reflection, sir. But you have not said who you suspect of this cruel business.”

“Ah, sir, who but the fair damsel of this very house. What woman is there like unto her in all the land?”

“Ha! Is it possible!”

“Possible!—why not possible?” demanded the surgeon. “Is she not young, and fair, and rich in goods and chattels, and who so likely to practise sorcery?”

“True, true!—but doctor, are you aware that you are not

the only victim? She has practised with perhaps greater success on others.’

“Indeed! Tell me, I pray you, sir!”

“Nay, I can only speak from hearsay. My friend here, Mr. Gray, can tell you more on the subject. The story goes—but I must refer you to him. Gray, take a ramble with Mr. Hillhouse, and see if you can not match his witchcraft case with one or more, much worse, if possible, than his own, and springing from the same fruitful source of mischief. Let him see that he does not lack for sympathy.”

Gray took the hint, and the surgeon readily accepted the invitation to a walk, in which the former continued to give to his companion a very succinct account of the duel between the brothers, and the engagement supposed to be existing between Clarence and Flora. The artful confederate of the outlaw, taking it for granted that a person so supremely vain and silly as the surgeon, might be made to believe anything, and could scarcely keep secret that he heard, arranged his materials in such a way as to make it appear that the fight between the brothers arose in consequence of the cruel treatment which Mary Clarkson had received at the hands of the younger. A purely magnanimous motive led the elder brother into the difficulty.

“Now, Mr. Conway, your patient, as soon as he heard that Colonel Conway was courting Miss Middleton, pursued him, only to reproach him for his breach of promise to the poor creature. The proud stomach of Colonel Conway couldn’t bear that, and he drew upon Mr. Conway and wounded him in the face before he could put himself in preparation. The poor girl who had been following the colonel, everywhere, in boy’s clothes, ran between them, and got her death, there’s no telling by whose hands. And so the case stands, at present. Mr. Conway, your patient, of course wouldn’t speak against his brother; and I s’pose, the marriage will go on between him and Miss Flora, unless——she may have changed her mind since you’ve come to the barony.”

“Ah! ha!” said the surgeon. “You’ve enlightened me very much, Mr. Watson Gray. I’m greatly your debtor. You are a

man of sense. I thank you, sir—I thank you very much. Suppose we return to the mansion. I am anxious to change these garments.”

“Change them, sir! What, your dress?”

The blunt mind of Gray couldn't perceive the association of ideas taking place in the brain of his companion.

Yes, I wish to put on a dove-colored suit. The dress which I now wear, does not suit the day, the circumstances, nor my present feelings.”

“What, sir?” demanded Gray in feigned astonishment. “Have you got a change for every day in the week? I have but *one* change in all.”

The surgeon turned upon the speaker with a look which plainly said:—

“Impertinent fellow, to venture upon such an offensive comparison.”

He contented himself, however, with remarking:—

“The wants of men, my good friend, differ according to their moral natures, the moods, and changes of mind by which they are governed. I have no doubt that two suits will be ample enough for *your* purposes; but for me, I have always striven to make my costume correspond with the particular feeling which affects me. My feelings are classed under different heads and orders, which have their subdivisions in turn, according to the degree, quality and strength of my several sensibilities. Of the first orders, there are two—pleasure and pain; under these heads come cheerfulness and sadness; these in turn have their degrees and qualities—under the first is hope, under the second, fear—then there are doubts and desires which follow these; and after all, I have omitted many still nicer divisions which I doubt if you could well appreciate. I have not spoken of love and hate—nor indeed, of any of the more positive and emphatic passions—but, for all of which I have been long provided with a suitable color and costume.”

“You don't mean to say that you've got a change suitable for every one of these?” said the woodman with some astonishment.

“You inquire, Mr. Gray, with the tone of one who will not

be likely to believe any assurance. Oblige me by witnessing for yourself. I had arranged to examine my wardrobe this very noon, as a sort of mental occupation, with which I relieve the tedium of repose, and bad weather, and unpleasant anticipations. Do me the favor to assist me in this examination. We may probably gather from it some useful lessons, and I will endeavor to explain, what is at present very imperfectly understood, the singular propriety of my principles. You shall be able, when you have heard my explanation, to know, from the dress I wear, what particular condition I am in that day. A man's costume, if properly classed, is a sort of pulse for his temper. This morning, when I rose, under the influence of one set of moods, I put on a meditation costume. I am in a brown dress you see. That shows that, when I put it on, I was in what is vulgarly called a 'brown study.' Circumstances, the ground of which you can not, perhaps, conjecture, prompt me to go back and change it for one of a dove color. You may perhaps comprehend the meaning of this hereafter.

"I reckon it's something about love, that dove color," said Gray bluntly. "Dove and love always go together."

"Ah, you are quick. You are naturally an intelligent person, I suspect. You will comprehend sooner than I expected. But come and see—come and see."

"This fool will do us excellent service," said the outlaw, when, at his return, Watson Gray recounted the events of the interview.

"He will go to Flora Middleton in his dove-colored small-clothes, and find some way of letting her know what a scamp Clarence Conway is, and what a martyr I have been to the cause of innocence betrayed. You did not let him guess that I had a hankering after Flora myself?"

"Surely not: I just let him know enough of the truth to lie about. A fool can do an immense deal of mischief with the tail-end of a truth."

"Which is always slippery," said the outlaw. "Well mischief can do us no harm. In this case, it is our good—it works for us. Let him kill Clarence Conway off in her esteem, and *he*, certainly, is not the thing to be afraid of. But did you really count his breeches?"

“No, God help me! I shook myself free from him as soon as I could. I’d as soon pry among the petticoats of my grandmothers. But he had an enormous quantity. I reckon he’s used up all his pay, ever since he began, in this sort of childishness.”

The conjectures of the outlaw, as respects the course of the exquisite, were soon realised. But a few days had elapsed when he availed himself of an opportunity to pursue Flora as he saw her taking her way through the grounds in the direction of the river. His toilet, however, was not completed when he caught a glimpse of her person through the window; and the task of completing it—always one of considerable pains and duration—enabled her to get considerably the start of him. She had passed the sentinels, who were sauntering at their stations, and had reached the lonely vault where her ancestors reposed. The solemn shadows of the wood by which it was encircled pleased her fancy; and the united murmurs of the pine-tops and the waters of the Congaree, as they hurried on at a little distance below, beguiled her thoughts into the sweet abodes of youthful meditation.

Flora Middleton was, as we have endeavored to show, a maiden of deeper character and firmer qualities than usually distinguish her age; perhaps, indeed, these characteristics are not often possessed in equal degree among her sex. Firmness of character usually implies a large share of cheerfulness and elasticity; and these also were attributes of her mind. Her life, so far, had been free from much trial. She had seldom been doomed to suffering. Now, for almost the first time, the shadows of the heart gathered around her, making her feet to falter, and bringing the tears into her eyes. The supposed infidelity of Clarence Conway had touched her deeply—more deeply than even she had at first apprehended. When she first heard the accusation against him, and saw the wretched condition of the poor girl whom she believed to be destroyed by his profligacy, she said, in the fervor of virtuous indignation which prevailed in her mind:—

“I will shake him off for ever, and forget that I ever knew him!”

But the resolution was more easily taken than kept. Each

subsequent hour had increased the difficulties of such a resolution; and, in the seeming death of her hopes alone, she discovered how entirely her heart had found its life in their preservation. When she believed the object of her attachment to be worthless—then, and not till then, did she feel how miserable its loss would make her heart. Perhaps, but for the very firmness of character of which we have spoken, she would neither have made nor maintained such a resolution. How many are the dependant hearts among her sex, who doubt, mistrust, fear, falter—and yet, accept!—who dare not reject the unworthy, because they can not forbear to love.

Flora Middleton felt the pain of the sacrifice the more deeply in consequence of the conviction, which her principles forced upon her, that it must yet be made. Could she have faltered with her pride and her principles, she would not have found the pain so keen. But she was resolute.

“No! no!” she murmured to herself, as all the arguments of love were arrayed before her by the affections—“No! no! though it kill me to say the words, yet I will say them. Clarence Conway, we are sundered—separated for ever! I might have borne much, and witnessed much, and feared much, but not this. This crime is too much for the most devoted love to bear.”

She was suddenly startled from her meditations by a slight whistle at a little distance. This was followed by a voice.

“Hist!” was the gentle summons that demanded her attention from the thicket on the river-banks, as she turned in the direction of the grounds. Her first feminine instinct prompted her to fly; but the masculine resolution of her mind emboldened her, and she advanced toward the spot whence the summons proceeded. As she approached, a head, and then the shoulders of a man, were elevated to the surface, as if from the bed of the river; and a closer approximation proved the stranger to be an old acquaintance.

“John Bannister!” exclaimed the maiden.

“Yes, Miss Flora, the very man—what’s left of him.”

“‘What’s left of him,’ John Bannister? Why, what’s the matter? are you hurt?”

"No, no, Miss Flora—I say 'what's left of me,' only because, you see, I don't feel as ef I am altogether a perfect man, when I have to dodge and shirk about, not able to find my friends, and always in a sort of scatteration of limbs, for fear that my enemies will find me. I am pretty well to do in health at this present, thanks be to God for all his mercies; though, when you saw me last, I reckon you thought I was in a bad fix. But I give 'em the slip handsomely, and used their own legs in coming off."

"How was it, Bannister? . . . But come up. You must be standing rather uncomfortably there."

"Pretty well-off, thank ye. There's a dug-out under me, and as I've only a word or two to say, I needn't git up any higher to say it."

"Well, as you please; but how did you make your escape from the British, John?"

"Ah, that's a long story, Miss Flora, and there's no needessity for teiling it, any how. Some other time, when the war's over, and every man can be brave a bit, without danger, I'll let you know the sarcumstances. But jest now, what I come for is to give you warning. Yec've got a sly rascal as ever lived in your house, at this present, that never yet was in any one place so long without doing mischief—one Watson Gray——"

"Why, he's attending on Mr. Conway."

"It's a pair on 'em, I tell you. That Watson Gray's after mischief, and it's a mischief that has you in it. But don't be scared. I want to let you know that there's one friend always at your sarvice, and nigh enough to have a hand in any business that consarns his friends. If anything happens, do you see, jest you hang a slip of white stuff—any old rag of a dress or handkerchief—on this bluff here, jest where you see me standing, and I'll see it before you've gone fur, or I'm no scout fit for the Congaree. Ef there's danger to you, there's help too; and, so far as the help of a good rifle and a strong arm can go—and I may say, Miss Flora, without familiarity, a good friend—dang my buttons ef you sha'n't have it."

"But, John, from what quarter is this danger to come? What is it? how will it come?"

“ Ah, that’s the danger. You might as well ask in what shape Satan will come next. But the d—’s in your house, that’s enough. Be careful, when he flies, he don’t carry off much more than he brought in. Maybe you’ll see a man, to-morrow or the next day, coming to Watson Gray’s. He’s about my heft, but jest with one half the number of arms. He’s a stout chap, poor fellow, to be cut short in that way. Now, you can trust him. Ef he says to you ‘Come,’ do you come. Ef he says ‘Stay,’ then do you stay; for he’s honest, and though he seems to be working for Watson Gray, he’s working handsomely agin him. You can trust him. He’s *our* man. I converted him to a good understanding of the truth of liberty; but I had to make every turn of it clear to him before he’d believe. We had two good argyments to try the case; but I throw’d him the last time, and he’s been sensible to the truth ever sence. ’Twas him that helped me out of the British clutches t’other day. But we won’t talk of that. Only you jest believe him, and hang out the white flag, here under the bluff, ef ever you need a friend’s sarvice.”

“ You confound and confuse me only, John Bannister, by what you have said. I believe that you mean me well, and that you think there is some danger; and I am willing to trust you. But I don’t like this half-confidence. Speak out plainly. What am I to fear? I am a woman, it’s true, but I am not a coward. I think I can hear the very worst, and think about it with tolerable courage afterward; nay, assist somewhat, perhaps, in your deliberations.”

“ Lord love you, Miss Flora, ef I was to tell you the little, small, sneaking signs, that makes a scout know when he’s on trail of an inimy, you’d mout-be only laugh. You wouldn’t believe, and you couldn’t onderstand. No, no! jest you keep quiet and watch for the smoke. As soon as you see the smoke, you’ll know there’s a fire onder it; which is as much as to say, jest when you see anything onderhand going on—scouts running this way, and scouts running that, and Watson Gray at the bottom of all ard busy—then you may know brimstone’s going to burn, and maybe gunpowder. Keep a sharp eye on that same Watson Gray. Suspicion him afore all. He’s a cunning

sarpent that knows how to hide under a green bush, and look like the yellow flow'r that b'longs to it."

"You said something about Mr. Conway—Mr. Edward Conway, John?"

He's another sarpent. But——"

The head of the scout sank below the bank. He had disappeared, as it were, in the bottom of the river; and while Flora Middleton trembled from apprehension, lest he had sunk into the stream, she was relieved by the accents of a voice at some little distance behind her, as of one approaching from the house. She turned to encounter Mr. Surgeon Killhouse, *now*, in his dove-colored small-clothes.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE RETURN OF THE BLACK RIDERS.

THE reader is already familiar with the business of the surgeon, and has probably conjectured the sort of answer which he received from the heiress of Middleton Barony. His dove-colored garments, and rose-color address, availed him little; though, it may be added, such was the fortunate self-complaisance of the suitor, that, when he retired from the field, he was still in considerable doubt of the nature of the answer which he had received. It was still a question in his mind whether he had been refused or not.

According to his usual modes of thinking, his doubts were reasonable enough. He had taken more than ordinary pains to perfect himself in the form of application which he intended to use. His fine sayings had been conned with great circumspection, and got by rote with the persevering diligence of a school-boy or a parrot. He had prepared himself to say a hundred handsome phrases. The colors of the rainbow, and the various odors of the flowers, had been made to mingle in a delicate adaptation to his particular parts of speech, in all the best graces

of that Euphuism of which, among his own *clique*, he had been usually recognised as the perfect master. He knew that Lady Belle would have turned up her eyes to heaven, in new-born ecstasies, had he but spoken his pretty speeches to her; and those of Lady Grace would have been filled with tears of a similar delight. How could he bring himself to believe that they had been thrown away on the unpractised auditories of the maid of Congaree?

The more he asked himself this question, the more difficult became his belief, and by the time that he reached his chamber, he was convinced that, at the most, he had only suffered an evasion—such an evasion as dandies are apt to practise upon their tailors, when they avoid, without refusing, payment—such an evasion as a cunning damsel might practise upon her lover, lest a too sudden concession might cheapen the value of her charms. So consoling was this new conviction, that he determined, in discarding his dove-colored small-clothes, not to put on his “Nightshade,”—so he called his “Despondency” or “Disappointment-dress;” but to select a dark orange-tinted garment—his “Pleasant-sadness”—as more certainly expressive of mingled hope and doubt, than any other color. The serious examination which took place in his mind, and of his wardrobe, before his choice was determined, served, beneficially, to sustain his sensibilities under the shock which they had necessarily suffered. That evening he was pleasingly pensive, and his eloquence was agreeably enlivened by an occasional and long-drawn sigh.

Flora Middleton did not suffer this “*Mosca*” to afflict her thoughts. Naturally of a serious and earnest character, she had other sources of disquietude which effectually banished so light an object from her contemplation; and nothing could so completely have mystified the surgeon, as the calm, unmoved, and utterly unaffected manner with which she made the usual inquiries at the evening table.

“Does your coffee suit you, Mr. Hillhouse? Is it sweet enough?”

“Would all things were equally so, Miss Middleton. We might dispense with the sweet in the coffee, could we escape from the bitter of life.”

“I should think, sir, that you had not been compelled to drink much of it; or you have swallowed the draught with wonderful resignation.”

“Alas!—have I not!” and he shook his smooth, sleek locks mournfully, from side to side, as if nobody had ever known such a long continued case of heart ache as his own. But Flora did not laugh. She was in no mood for it; and though the frequent *niaiseries* of the surgeon might have provoked her unbounded merriment at another time, her heart was too full of her own doubts and difficulties not to deprive her, most effectually, of any such disposition now.

The next day she was somewhat startled at the sudden arrival of a man at the barony, whom she instantly recognised as the person meant by John Bannister when he spoke to her the day before. His frame was large and muscular, like that of Bannister, but he was deficient in one of his arms. She fancied, too, that he watched her with a good deal of interest, as he passed her on the staircase, making his way to the apartment of the invalid, and his attendant, Gray. It was evident that Bannister had some intimate knowledge of what was going on among her inmates, and this was another reason why her own anxieties should increase, as she remembered the warnings to watchfulness which the worthy scout had given her. She was well disposed to confide in him. Strange to say, though she knew him chiefly as the friend of Clarence Conway, and had every present reason to believe in the faithlessness and unworthiness of the latter, her confidence in, and esteem for, John Bannister, remained entirely unimpaired. The wonder was that Conway should have so entirely secured the affections of such a creature. This wonder struck Flora Middleton, but she had heard of such instances, and it does not seem unnatural that there should be still some one, or more, who, in the general belief in our unworthiness, should still doubt and linger on, and love to the very last. We are all unwilling to be disappointed in our friends, not because they are so, but because it is our judgment which has made them so. Bewildered, and with a heavy heart, that seemed ominous of approaching evil, Flora retired to her chamber with an aching head, while our old ac-

quaintance, Isaac Muggs, the landlord, was kept in busy consultation with the outlaw and his confidant.

We pass over all such portions of the conference as do not promise to assist us in our narrative; and the reader may fancy for himself the long ejaculations, which the landlord uttered, at finding his old associate and captain reduced to his present condition;—ejaculations, which were increased in length and lugubriousness, in due proportion with the treachery which Muggs meditated, and of which he had already been guilty.

“Enough, enough of your sorrow, good Isaac,” said the outlaw with some impatience: “these regrets and sorrows will do for a time when we have more leisure, and as little need of them. Give me good news in as few words as possible. Your good wishes I can readily understand without your speaking them.”

Muggs professed his readiness to answer, and Watson Gray conducted the inquiry; Morton, assisting only at moments, when moved by a particular anxiety upon some particular point.

“Did you meet Brydone before you separated from Rawdon’s army?”

“Yes: he joined us at Ninety-Six.”

“He told you the plan.”

“Yes.”

“You are willing? You’ve got the boats?”

“I can get them.”

“When—in what time?”

“Well, in four days, I reckon, if need be.”

“Are you sure?”

“I reckon, I may say so. I’m pretty sartin.”

Here Morton turned upon the couch, and half raised himself from it.

“Look you, Muggs, you speak with only half a heart. You seem scared at something. What’s the matter with you, man? are you not willing?”

“Yes, cap’in, I’m willing enough. Why shouldn’t I be willing? I’ll do all that you ax me.”

“That is you’ll get the boats in readiness, here, at the landing, within four days; but, are you willing to fly yourself? You are not fool enough to fancy that the rebels will let you remain

ere when the army's gone, to enjoy what you've despoiled them of."

"No great deal, cap'in, I reckon."

"Ay, but there is Muggs! You cannot deceive me, though you may the rest. I know your gains, and a word of mine would send them flying much more rapidly than they were ever brought together. Do not provoke me, man, to speak that word."

"Well, cap'in, I dont want to provoke you. Don't I tell you that I'll do all you wish."

"Ay, but you seem d——d lukewarm about it, Muggs; and you have not said whether you are willing to join our fortunes or not. Now, you join us, heart and soul, body and substance, one and all, or we cut loose from you at once. You are in our power, Muggs, and we can destroy you at a moment's warning. But it's neither our policy nor wish to do so. You can help us materially, and we are willing to help you in return. Bounty lands await you in the West Indies. You will live with old friends and neighbors, and with your guineas——"

"Mighty few of them, I reckon, cap'in," said Muggs.

"Few or many, you can only save them by flight. Are you ready? Beware how you answer! Beware! You must go with us entirely, or not at all."

An acute observer might have seen, while the outlaw was speaking, an expression of sullenness, if not resistance, in the face of the landlord, which did not argue the utmost deference for the speaker, and seemed to threaten an outbreak of defiance. But if Muggs felt any such mood, he adopted the wiser policy of suppressing it for the present.

"Swounds, cap'in," he exclaimed, with more earnestness than he had before shown in the interview—"You talk as if you was jub'ous of me,—as if I worn't your best friend from the beginning. I'm willing to go with you, I'm sure, wherever you think it safest; but you're mistaken if you think I've got so much to lose, and so much to carry away. Mighty little it would be, if the rebels did find every guinea and shilling in my keeping."

"Pshaw, Muggs, you cannot blind me with that nonsense. Be your guineas few or many, it is enough that you know where

to carry them, and how to keep them in safety. And now, what of Rawdon? Where did you leave him?"

"At Ninety-Six."

"He had beaten Greene?"

"Run him off from the siege only."

"Well: what next. Does Rawdon leave a garrison at Ninety-Six?"

"I reckon not. There was some talk that he means to sarve it as he sarved Camden. Burn the town and tear up the stockade."

"As I thought. That's, certainly, his proper policy. Well! was the troop still with Rawdon?"

"No: they were gone after Conway, somewhere above upon the Ennoree."

"May they find him, and batter out each other's brains at the meeting," was the pious and fraternal wish of the outlaw.

"And now, Muggs," he continued, "the sooner you take your departure the better. Get your boats ready, yourself and guineas, and be at the landing here, at midnight, four days hence."

"So soon!" said Gray. "Do you think, captain, you'll be able by that time?"

"Ay! able for anything. I must be able. This flight of Rawdon will render mine necessary, with as little delay as possible."

"But he has not fled yet?"

"Pooh! pooh! A retreat in his condition, is only another word for a flight. But if he does not yet fly, he will have to do so, before very long. He is preparing for it now, and I have for some time past been aware of the approaching necessity. He must not descend the country before I do, that is certain; and if I can descend the Santee in boats, I can endure a wagon the rest of the way, to the head of Cooper river. The rest is easy. The important object is to secure faithful boatmen; and with you, Muggs, and a few others, upon whom I can rely, I have no doubts, and no apprehensions."

The landlord was dismissed upon his secret mission. Watson Gray conducted him to the banks of the river, where lay the

identical boat in which our friend John Bannister had approached the shore in seeking the interview with Flora Middleton. It was huddled up in the green sedge and bushes at the edge of the river swamp, and thus concealed from the eyes of the passing spectator. Before parting, Gray gave his final instructions to the landlord, in which he contemplated every matter essential to the journey, and, perhaps, conducted the affair with less offence to the feelings of the latter than had been the case on the part of the outlaw. Scarcely had Watson Gray gone from sight, before Bannister emerged from the swamp thicket and joined the other.

"He's a cute chap, that same Watson Gray, as ever beat about a thicket without getting into the paws of a black bear at rutting season. I'm a thinking ef the man was decent honest, I'd sooner have him in a troop of mine, than any man I knows on. He's a raal keener for a sarch. I'd reckon now, Isaac Muggs, from the way he slobber'd you over in talking, that he was a meaning to swallow you when all was done. It's the way with the big snakes, when the mouthful is a leetle big at the beginning."

"I reckon that's his meaning, Supple Jack,—I'm jub'ous that's what both he and the cap'in are a conjuring."

"And I am thinking, Muggs, that he was a trying to ease off something that he said to you before, which went agin the grain, and made the teeth grit."

"'Twan't him that said it—'twas the cap'in."

"A pair on 'em—both sarpernts,—mou't-be, different kinds of sarpernt; but the bite of a rattle or a viper, is, after all, the bite of a sarpernt; and it don't matter much which a man dies of, when both can kill. But what made the captain graze agin your feelings?"

"Why, he's a trying to make a scare of me about staying here, when he's gone. He says there's no safety for me among the rebels."

"I reckon, Isaac Muggs, there's an easy answer for all that. You've jest got to p'int to me, and say, 'That 'ere man convarted me by strong argyment,' and I reckon nobody'll be so bold as to touch you after that."

“He threathened me too;—and I to be the first to advise him to make long tracks from the troop!”

“I’m mighty sorry you ever gin him such advice, Isaac,” said Bannister, rebukingly.

“Yes: but though he made b’lieve that he was angry, and all that, now, to-night, he tells me how he’s been getting ready a long time for a start.”

“I b’lieve him! Indeed, I knows as much! Well, I’m willing that he should get away, Isaac Muggs, without any hurt to hair or hide. For, though he deserves hanging and quartering as much as ever man deserved it, yet he’s come of the same blood, half way, with Clarence Conway; and for his sake, I’m willing to let Ned Conway get clear of the hanging. I shouldn’t be so mighty anxious to help him out of the way of a bullet, for that’s the business of a soldier, to die by shot or steel, and it don’t disgrace him, though it’s hurtful to his feelings. I’d help to find the hoat for him myself, and send him on his way, ef he was content to git off with his own hide in safety. But when he’s after his villany to the last—when I know that he wants to carry off another Congaree gal, and, this time, agin her will——”

“I’m a-thinking, Supple, that you’re clean mistaken in that. Neither him nor Gray said a word about it.”

“Not to *you*, Isaac. They’d ha’ been but small sodgers if they had. No! no! They know’d that twa’n’t the way to get their business done, to make it more difficult. They were rather jub’ous of you, you say yourself, though all they pretended to want of you was, jest to carry off the cap’in. Would it ha’ made it any easier to tell you that they wanted you to help to carry off the young woman from her friends and family; and, as I’m thinking, to stop also in their way down and clean the plantation of his father’s widow of all it’s niggers? No! no! Isaac! They know how to play the game better than that. They tell you they play for high and low, only; but watch them well, and they’ll make their Jack too, and try mighty hard to count up game! But, the game’s in our hands now, Isaac: at least, I’m a-thinking so. As for you and your guineas—I don’t ax you how many you’ve got—but jest you do as I tell you, and

I'll answer for their safety. We'll get the boats and the hands between us, and we'll have 'em all ready when the time comes, and if the gal is to be whipped off, it won't make it less pleasant to us to have the handling of her. Do you cross the river now, and be sure and put the boat high up in the creek. I'll keep on this side a leetle longer. I have a leetle matter of business here."

"You're mighty ventersome, Supple."

"It's a sort o' natur', Isaac. I always was so. A leetle dance on the very edge of the dangerous place, is a sort of strong drink to me, and makes my blood warm and agreeable. I'll jest scout about the woods here and see who's waking and who's sleeping; and who's a-tween sleeping and waking like myself."

The first attentions of Jack Bannister were paid to the sleeping. He watched the progress of his comrade, until his little barge had disappeared from sight in the distance, then made his way with the intensity of a natural affection, to the lonely spot where his hands had dug the grave for Mary Clarkson, and where her body had been laid. Here he paused a few moments in silent meditation, then proceeded to the dense thicket to which, on the night when she fled from the barony, he bore her inanimate person.

When he reached the spot, he kindled his light, and drew from a hollow tree a hatchet and rude saw which had been formed from an old sabre, the teeth of which had been made by hacking it upon some harder edge than its own. He then produced from another place of concealment sundry pieces of timber, upon which he had already spent some labor, and to which his labor was again addressed. Gradually, a long, slender, and not ungracefully wrought shaft of white wood appeared beneath his hands, into which he morticed the arms of a cross, with a degree of neatness, and symmetry, which would have done no discredit to the toils of a better artist, under the more certain guidance of the daylight. This little memento, he was evidently preparing, in silence and seclusion, and with that solemnity which belongs to the pure and earnest affection, for the lonely grave which he had just visited. With a fond toil, which with-

held no care, and spared no effort, he now proceeded—his more heavy task being finished—to a portion of his work which, perhaps, was the most fatiguing of all the labors of love which he had imposed upon himself. This was to cut into the wood the simple initials of the poor girl for whom the memorial was intended. Our worthy woodman was no architect, and the rude Gothic letters which his knife dug into the wood, may perhaps have awakened, subsequently, the frequent smile of the irreverent traveller. He possibly anticipated the criticisms of the forward schoolboy, as he murmured, while sweating over his rude labors—

“It’s a precious small chance for l’arning that Jack Bannister ever got upon the Congaree; but it’s the best that I can do for poor Mary, and I’d ha’ been willing to give her the best of me from the beginning. But twa’n’t ordered so by Providence, and there’s no use for further talk about it. If I hadn’t used a man’s we’pon upon her, I’d be a-mighty deal more easy now, but God knows, ’twasn’t meant for her—’twasn’t any how from the heart—and ’twas nateral that a man should strike, hard and quick, when he finds another jumping out upon him from the bush. Who’d ha’ thought to find a gal in man’s clothes, jest then too, in the thick of the fighting? But the Lord’s over all, and he does it for the best. That sorrow’s done with, or ought to be done with; and the sensible person ought to be satisfied to look out and prepare only for them that’s yet to come. This board is a sort of line between them old times and the coming ones; and these two letters shall say to Jack Bannister, nothing more than—‘Look for’a’d, Jack; there’s no use in looking back!’ Yet everybody can make ’em out, though they may read quite another lesson. They’ll laugh, may be at such printing. It’s bad enough, sartin; but it’s the best I could do. There’s a mighty ugly lean about that ‘M.,’ jest as if it was a tumbling for’a’d upon the ‘C.’—yet I thought I had got the two running pretty even together. Well, there’s no helping it now. It must stand till the time comes when I can pay the stonecutter to do a good one.”

From his horn, he filled with powder the lines which he had cut in the wood, and then ignited it. The blackened traces

made the simple inscription sufficiently distinct, and the good fellow, shouldering his rude monument, bore it to the grave, and drove it down at the head of the inmate.

He had not well finished this work, before he fancied that he heard foreign sounds mingling suddenly with the murmurs of the Congaree, as it plied its incessant way below. He listened, and the murmurs deepened. He went forward, cautiously, through the wood, and it was not long before he discerned the advance of a body of men, all well mounted, whom, upon a nearer approach, he discerned to be the Black Riders.

John Bannister was not a man to be alarmed easily; but he retreated, and stole into the cover of a bay, the thicket of which he knew was not penetrable by cavalry. Here he crouched in silence, and the formidable band of outlaws slowly wound along in silence, through the forest, and on the very edge of the thicket in which he lay concealed.

A new care filled his bosom, as he beheld their progress in the direction of the barony. He had no means of contending with such a force, and where was Clarence Conway? Feeling for his commander, and sympathizing with his affections, the first thought of Bannister had reference to the new dangers which beset the path of Flora Middleton. He was surprised, however, to perceive that the banditti came to a halt but a little distance from him. They alighted, the words of command were passed along in whispers, and in ten minutes they prepared to bivouac.

CHAPTER XXXIV

MESSES.

“WELL, it's mighty strange, I'm thinking, that they don't go for'a'd. They're as cautious and scary, now, as ef the whole of Sumter's regiment was at the Park. They're after some new mischief that's more in want of a night covering than any they've ever done before. Well, we'll see! There's Watson Gray with his corporal's guard at the house; and here's the Black Riders here; and if the two git together, it's precious little that John Bannister can do, with the help of Isaac Muggs, and he with one hand only. Ef I could work poor Jake Clarkson out of their fingers, he'd make a third, and no small help he'd give us in a straight for'a'd, up and down fight. But, I'm jub'ous he stands a bad chance in the grip of Watson Gray. Ef I could git round now to the barony, and show reason to Miss Flora to slip off to the river, I wouldn't wait for Ned Conway to stir; but I'd hide her away in the Congaree, where the swamp-fox himself couldn't find her. But then there's no hope of that. There's a strange way of thinking among young women that's never had the blessing of a husband, as ef it wouldn't be so decent and delicate to trust a single man under such sarcumstances; which is mighty foolish! But something must be done, and John Bannister must be in the way of doing it. Lord love us!—ef he would only send Clarence now, with fifty of his troop, among these bloody black refugees!”

The course of John Bannister's thoughts may be traced in the above soliloquy. The good fellow felt the difficulties of his own position; though, it is clear, that apprehension for himself was the last subject in his mind; the only one which awakened no anxiety, and called forth little consideration. To rescue Flora Middleton was his sole object. He knew the desires of Edward Conway for that maiden, and naturally concluded that

the arrival of his troop would give him the power to accomplish his wishes, even by violence, if necessary. It was therefore a reasonable occasion for surprise and conjecture, when he found the outlaws taking their halt and supper on the skirts of the barony, and in profound silence and secrecy. That they should keep aloof from their captain, when nothing lay in the way to prevent or retard their reunion with him, was naturally calculated to mystify the scout. He little knew the character and extent of those malign influences, which prevailed among that wild and savage body, unfavorable to their ancient leader.

It was with increasing concern and interest that Bannister, in following and watching the movements of the outlaws, found them about to throw a line of sentinels between the grounds of the barony and the river landing. This measure denoted certain suspicions which they entertained, as he fancied, of the practices in which he had been recently engaged; and it became necessary that he should find means to apprise his comrade, Muggs, on the other side of the Congaree, of the danger that awaited any undue exposure of his person in his future crossings to and fro.

"A long swim!" muttered the faithful scout, with a slight shiver, as he surveyed the river; "and rather a cold swim, too, at midnight; but I'll have to do it. If I don't, they'll riddle poor Isaac's belly with bullets, when he's thinking of nothing worse to put in it than his breakfast. But I must dodge about the house first and see what's a-going on in that quarter. It seems mighty strange that they shouldn't have made themselves known to their captain. What's to be afeard of? But rogues is always a myster'ous and jab'ous sort of things. A rascal never goes straight to his business. If he has to shake hands with you he does it with a sort of twist, and a twirl, and sometimes a squint, that looks every which way but the right one. Now, it's reasonable that a good scout should shy off, and dodge, and make himself as squat and small, under a bush, as he naterally can, and as a big body will let him. But when the game's a straight-for'a'd one—when there's no dangers nor no inirny, and only one's own affairs to see after—it's a sign of a rogue all over that he shirks. It shows that he shirks from the love of the thing, and not because it's a needcessity."

John Bannister did not suffer his moral philosophy to keep him inactive. He was one of those who philosophize yet go forward—a race of which the world has comparatively few. In obedience to his determination, as expressed above, he stole through the ways which had been sufficiently traversed by his feet to be familiar, which led him, without detection, to the grounds immediately about the mansion. At the front door of the dwelling, which was closed, he saw one sentinel on duty. But he yawned, emphatically and loud, more than once while the scout watched him; and by his listless movements seemed evidently weary enough of his post to leave it to itself at the first seasonable summons. The most perfect military subordination was not preserved by him as he paced to and fro along the court. He sang, and whistled, and soliloquized; and, not unfrequently, relieved the dull measured step of the sentinel by the indulgence of such a gavotte as a beef-eating British soldier of the “prince’s own” might be supposed capable of displaying in that period of buckram movement.

“He’d hop higher and dance a mighty sight better,” murmured John Bannister, as he beheld the “signior of the night” in this grave exercise, “ef he was only on the ‘liberty’ side of the question. He gits a shilling a day, and a full belly; but he ain’t got the light heart after all. Give me a supper of acorns, b’iled or unb’iled, in the Santee swamp, before all his hot bread; if so be, the cause I’m a-fighting for can’t give me a better heart to dance than that. Lord! he can no more shake a leg with the Congaree Blues than he can sight a rifle!”

Contenting himself with this comparison, and the brief survey which had induced it, he turned away, and, traversing the settlement, came to the out-house in which, once before, he had seen the guard busy in their gaming practices. A light glimmering through the log chinks apprized him of the presence there of an occupant; and, approaching cautiously, and peeping through an aperture in the rear of the mud structure, he was struck with the sight of an object, to him, of very painful interest. This was Jake Clarkson, very securely fastened with ropes, which confined both his hands and feet.

The old man leaned, rather than sat, against the wall of one

section of the building. A dull composure, which seemed that of a mortal apathy, overspread the poor fellow's countenance. His eyes were half closed, his mouth drawn down, yet open, and the listlessness of death, if not its entire unconsciousness, prevailed in the expression of all his features.

Four of the British soldiers were present in the apartment; two of them stretched at length upon the floor, seemingly asleep, and the other two, busy to themselves, playing languidly at their favorite game, which they relieved by a dialogue carried on sufficiently loud to enable Bannister to learn its purport. From this he gathered enough to know that the improvement of Edward Conway was such as to promise them a change, for which they pined, from the dull monotonous recurrence of the same unexciting duties, to the adventures of the march, and all those circumstances of perpetual transition, which compensate the rover for all the privations which he must necessarily undergo in leaving his early homestead.

But the eyes and thoughts of Bannister were fixed on the prisoner only. The pressure of surrounding foes only made him the more anxious to gather together and secure his friends; and thinking of poor Mary was also calculated to make him eagerly desirous to recover her father. This desire grew more keen and irresistible the more he watched and reflected, and it was with some difficulty that he restrained his lips from the impetuous assertion of his determination to release him from his bonds or perish. This resolve, though not expressed aloud, was still the occasion of a brief soliloquy.

“Dang my buttons, ef I don't try it! If there's time it can be done, and there's no harm in trying. A rifle in Jake's hands is a something that acts as well as speaks; and if so be, we're to have trouble, a bullet from a twisted bore is a mighty good argyment in clearing the track for the truth. It's a sort of axe-stroke, leading the way for the grubbing-hoe.”

Ten minutes after, and Jake Clarkson was roused from his stupor by the slight prick of a sharp instrument from behind him. The nervous sensibility of the old man had been pretty well blunted by time, trial, and misfortune; and he neither started nor showed the slightest symptom of excitement. But

his eyes grew brighter, his mind was brought back to the world in which his body lingered still, and a lively apprehension was awakened within him, lest the gambling soldiers should see, or hear, the hand that he now felt was busy in the effort to extricate him from his bonds. He did not dare to stir or look; but he was already conscious that the *couteau de chasse* of the woodman, fastened to a long stick, had been thrust through the crevices of the logs, and was busily plied in sawing asunder the cords that fastened his arms. These had been tied behind the prisoner, and he prudently kept them in that position, even though, in a few moments after, he felt that their ligatures had yielded to the knife.

The workman ceased from without. His task, so far as it could be effected by him, seemed to be ended; but the feet of the prisoner were still secured. The friendly assistant seemed to have disappeared. A full half hour elapsed and Jake heard nothing. The soldiers still kept at their game, and the prisoner, exhausted with the excitement of his new hope, leaned once more against the wall.

In doing so he again felt the sharp prick of the knife-point. Cautiously, but with nerves that trembled for the first time, he availed himself of one of his freed hands to possess himself of the instrument; which now, separated from the handle, had been left by the scout for the farther benefit of the prisoner. He clutched it with strange delight. The momentary impulse almost moved him to spring to his feet, and bound upon the guard with the most murderous determination. But the prudence of his friend's course from without, was not wasted upon him, and he contented himself with quietly securing the knife behind him, placing his hands in the same position in which his cords had previously secured them, and, with new hopes in his bosom, preparing to wait the proper moment when he might safely proceed to finish the work of his emancipation.

Satisfied that he had done all that he could, at this time, for the rescue of Clarkson, the scout took his way back to the river, the banks of which he ascended a few hundred yards, and then, without reluctance, committed himself to the stream. Half-way across, the rocks afforded him a momentary resting-place, from

which he surveyed, with a mournful satisfaction, the white cross which his hands, but a little while before, had reared upon the grave of Mary Clarkson. It stood conspicuous in sight for several miles along the river.

The still hours of the night were speeding on; and the murmur of the river began to be coupled with the sudden notes of birds, along its banks, anticipating the approach of the morning. A sense of weariness for the first time began to oppress the limbs of the woodman, and it needed a strong and resolute mental effort to prevent him from yielding to sleep upon the slippery black rock which gave him a temporary resting-place in the bosom of the stream. Plunging off anew, he reached the opposite banks, fatigued but not dispirited. Here, he soon transferred the duties of the watch to his comrade. To the landlord he briefly communicated the events of the evening, and bestowed upon him the necessary advice for caution.

Meanwhile, a spirit equally anxious and busy, pervaded the breasts of some few in the encampment of the Black Riders. The watches had been set, the guards duly placed, and the sentinels, being made to form a complete cordon around the barony, Lieutenant Stockton, acting as captain, went aside, in consultation with his apt coadjutor, Ensign Darcy. The tone and language of the former were now much more elevated, more confident and exulting, than usual. The realization of his desires was at hand. He had met the approbation of Lord Rawdon, in the conduct which he had displayed in the management of his troop during the late march, and nothing seemed wanting to his wishes but that his immediate superior should be no longer in his way. To supersede him, however, was not easy, since the personal grounds of hostility which Stockton felt could not be expressed to their mutual superior; and these were such as to lead the former to desire something beyond the mere command of the troop which he had in charge.

It was necessary not merely to degrade but to destroy his principal. The humiliating secret which Edward Morton possessed, to his detriment, was equally an occasion for his hate and fear; and all his arts had been exercised to find some pretext for putting out of his way a person whose continued life

threatened him with constant and humiliating exposure. Circumstances had co-operated with the desires of the conspirators. The secret of Edward Morton had been betrayed. It was known that he desired to escape from the troop ;—that he was planning a secret flight to the city ;—that he had already sent off considerable treasure ; and, that he awaited nothing but a partial recovery of his strength, and the arrival of certain boats which had been pledged to him by the landlord, Muggs, to put his project in execution.

In thus proceeding, he had violated the laws of the confederacy—the fearful oath which bound the outlaws together—an oath taken in blood ; and the violation of which incurred all the penalties of blood. No wonder that Stockton exulted. His proceedings were now all legitimate. His hate had a justifiable sanction, according to the tenets of his victim, equally with himself. It was the law of the troop. It was now indeed his duty to prosecute to the death the traitor who would surrender all of them to destruction ; and the only remaining security left to Morton was the rigid trial to which his band was sworn. The bloody doom which his treachery incurred, was to be inflicted only after the fullest proofs that it was justly merited. In this lay his only chance of safety, and this chance rested upon a slender foundation. One of his special and most trusted agents had been bought over by the machinations of Darcy, and had betrayed him. He had involved another of the band in his developments, and this other had confessed. Two witnesses concurring against him and the proof was held to be conclusive ; and of these two witnesses Stockton was now secure.

But other considerations were involved in the deliberations of the parties. Edward Morton they knew to be a desperate man. Watson Gray was a man to be feared as well as hated. These were in possession of a strong brick dwelling, with probably a dozen musketeers under arms, and commanded by Rawdon to obey them in every particular.

It was no part of the policy of Stockton, to come to blows under such circumstances. Some artifice was necessary to effect his objects. To get the soldiers out of the way, to baffle Gray, and secure possession of Edward Morton, was the design which

they had resolved upon, and this required considerable management, and excessive caution in their approach. Besides, one of their witnesses was absent on a scout, and to declare their purpose, until he was present to maintain it by his oath, would have been premature and imprudent. It was also their object to capture the landlord, Muggs, whose proposed agency in securing the boats for the flight of Edward Morton was known to the conspirators through the individual who had first betrayed his employer to his enemies. Hence the watch which had been set upon the river-landing, and which had compelled Bannister to swim the stream that night.

These matters formed the subjects of deliberation between the two conspirators. Their successes, so far, made them sanguine of the future; and the rich rewards which it promised them, made them equally joyful. The treasures of their captain were to be equally divided between themselves, and we find them accordingly quite as busy in counting, as in securing their chickens.

“Pete Flagg has charge of the negroes, over two hundred already, and there are those from the place of his stepmother, which he planned to take off with him in these boats of Muggs. I know where to go for his guineas—ay, to lay my hands upon the vault; but we must get the memorandum acknowledgment which I reckon he has about him, from John Wagner, who keeps his money. There must be three thousand guineas at the least.”

“We share equally,” said Stockton, with eager eyes. “That of course is understood.”

“Yes: but there should be a private paper between us,” said Darcy.

“What need? we know each other.”

“Ay, but the best friends can not be too cautious. I have drawn out a little memorandum which we can both sign tomorrow.”

“Agreed; I’m willing. But no witnesses, Darcy—that would ruin all.”

“Yes—that’s the d—l. Let the troop once know what we

count upon—and our chance would be as bad, or even worse than his. We should hang with him!”

“Him we have! Him we have! I would Brydone were here. I long for the moment to wind up our long account of hate. It will be the sweetest moment of my life when I command them to drag him to the tree.”

“Be patient—don’t let your hate risk our gains. We can get nothing by working rashly. These eight or ten soldiers that he has here would make desperate fight. That scoundrel, Gray, must have suspected us when he asked Rawdon for them.”

“Well, well—he’ll have his turn also.”

“I doubt we’ll have to fix him along with the captain. He’s a bird out of the same nest.”

“I shall be willing. I have no love for him.”

“Did you tell Brydone when to meet you here?”

“Yes!—that’s all arranged!”

“By that time we ought to have possession of the captain.”

“Ay, then or never. We must have him and all things in readiness by the time Brydone comes. Are you sure of the men? Is there none doubtful?”

“None. There’s a few milk-hearted fellows only, but they’re of the scary sort. They’ll offer no opposition when they find so many against them.”

“Be sure of them, also, if you can. I’d even give something to make all sure. There must be no bungling at the last moment. If there is, and he has any chance to talk, he is so d—d artful of tongue, that he’d work courage into the most cowardly heart. I fear him still.”

“I do not. I know *them*, and I know *him*,” replied the subordinate. “His day is done. He hasn’t the same power over them that he had of old, and the late profits have enlightened them considerably on the subject of your better management.”

“Yes, those guineas were good arguments, I think.”

“Famous. But the better is to be shown. His treachery is the best. Let them but know conclusively that his purpose is to give them up, break the law, and leave them—perhaps.

betray them into Sumter's clutches—and there will be but one voice among them, and that will be, 'Death to the traitor!'"

"So be it. To-morrow night we have him, and with the rise of another sun he dies."

"Yes, if Brydone comes in time for the trial."

"Brydone or not, Darcy—he dies."

CHAPTER XXXV.

BAGATELLE BEFORE BUSINESS.

THIS will suffice to show the policy of the confederates. Their plans of treachery were nearly complete, and they were weaving them with the silent industry and circumspection of the spider, who already sees and has chosen his victim.

Little did Edward Morton fancy, at this moment, the web that environed and the dangers which threatened him. He himself was busy in his own plans of similar treachery. His wounds were healing fast, his strength returning, and with his strength came back the old passions of evil which had heretofore inflamed his heart to its own debasement. The mournful fate of the poor Mary Clarkson had already passed from his thought, and almost from his memory; and, if remembered at all, it was only in connection with the new feeling of freedom which he felt in her absence. Her death he now regarded as a sort of Providential interference, by which he was relieved of a burden at the auspicious moment when it must have become more burdensome than ever.

Circumstances seemed to favor him on every hand; and the influence of mind upon matter was never more favorably shown than in the improvement of his health and strength, under the agreeable sensations which he experienced from a review of all the promising results which seemed to await only his recovery. In a few days his bark, richly freighted, was to bear him away to a region of security and peace, in which, free from all harass

sing dangers which had so long attended his progress, he was to enjoy the fruit of his toils, and taste the luxuries of a fresh and long-desired delight. He would shake himself free from his old connections—a wish long since entertained; he would fly with the woman whom he loved, from the foes whom he feared and hated—to the peace for which he had yearned, and to that affluence which a mercenary appetite for gain had already accumulated in abundance.

No wonder, then, that, revelling in these convictions, he laughed and sang at intervals, as Watson Gray and himself discussed their mutual plans and glowing expectations. The skies never seemed to look down more propitiously bright than upon their joint wishes and performances; and even Watson Gray, habitually stern and composed in his bearing and demeanor, condescended to join in his principal's merriment, and to minister to his mirthful mood, by a relation of such of the particulars of the surgeon's wooing as had come to his knowledge.

We have seen the share which Gray had in promoting the objects of Hillhouse. He knew, of course, that Flora Middleton would scorn such a suitor. He had already beheld the indifference—to call the feeling by its most innocent epithet—with which she regarded him; and he, as well as the outlaw, knew enough of human, or rather woman nature, to be sure that the result of his application would be at once amusing and unsuccessful. Gray recounted, for the benefit of his superior, the preparatory toils which Hillhouse had undergone at his toilet—partly in his presence—in determining upon the colors of his suit, the style and pattern of his dress, and the manner, audacious or subdued, in which he should make his first approaches. In choosing his costume, he seemed disposed to realise the pictorial satire with which the ancient artists used to describe the self-perplexity of the Englishman in putting on his clothes:—

“I am an Englishman, and naked I stand here,
Musing in my mind what garment I shall wear;
Now I shall wear this, and now I shall wear that,
And now I shall wear—I can not tell what.”

The reader is aware that the dove-colored suit was triumph-

ant; but he does not so well know the peculiar air which marked the carriage of the suitor. Watson Gray had seen him depart, and had beheld him on his return. We know, that by the time Hillhouse got back to the house, he had fairly convinced himself that the unqualified rejection of Flora Middleton had been, in reality, nothing more than that ordinary mode of evasion among the sex, of the uses of which none of them are wholly ignorant, and with which they simply mean to heighten the value of their subsequent concessions.

Thus assured, his countenance wore nothing of discomfiture in its expression. Nay, so perfectly triumphant did it seem, that Gray, who could not altogether believe that the world possessed any instance of such thoroughly self-blinding vanity, began to tremble lest Flora, with that weakness of the sex which makes them miracles of caprice upon occasion, had, in her unhappy moments, been over-persuaded and had yielded. Staggered for an instant by this apprehension, he was left but a little while in doubt. When Hillhouse gave the tenor of her answer, Gray laughed outright, and hurried away to share the pleasure with his superior. The surgeon followed him to the chamber of the outlaw, as soon as he had succeeded in adopting the symbol of a fitting sentiment for the new change which he contemplated in his garments; and, without intending any such favor, he delighted the invalid by a candid revelation of the events which had just taken place, and which he deemed to be so favorable to his desires.

"May you always be so fortunate!" was the generous wish of the outlaw, as the surgeon concluded his narrative.

"Thank you. You are too good. I doubt not I shall be. But, in truth, is it not wonderful that a country girl—a mere rustic, as she is—should be able to practise those arts which belong only to fashionable life?"

"An instinct—an instinct, my dear sir."

"Well, 'pon my affections, I think so."

"They're all alike, Mr. Hillhouse—high and low, rich and poor, city-bred and country-bred—they all know how to baffle the ardent, and stimulate by baffling."

"It will somewhat reconcile me to the event," said the sur-

geon. "I had my apprehensions about the poor girl's bearing in good society. I should have felt the awkwardness of bringing into the upper circles the unsophisticated damsel of the woods, such as she seemed to be at first; but now——"

"The instinct of the sex will usually supply the want of training—it will save you every annoyance; but, even were it otherwise, Mr. Hillhouse, how charming would it have been to have shown her in the fine world as the beautiful savage from the Congaree!"

'Gad, yes! I never thought of that."

"An aboriginal princess."

"Like Powkerhorontas! Ay, I have heard of that princess. She was a Virginian princess. My old friend, Sir Marmaduke Mincing, told me all her history—how she had fought her father, and rescued the captain—what was his name?—But no matter—It was something very low and vulgar. She married him; and Sir Marmaduke, who had seen her, said she had really a very human countenance, and was quite like a woman; but"—lifting his hands in horror—"her feet? They were monstrous. They were four feet, rather than two. Ha, ha! four feet! Do you take me with you, Captain Conway? Four feet rather than two!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Gray; and Conway also echoed the laughter of the surgeon, but it was rather at himself than his wit.

"But the feet of your princess here, Miss Middleton, are really very good, and rather small feet, Mr. Hillhouse. They will occasion no fright!"

"Ah, true, quite respectable as feet—quite respectable! She will do; and your idea, sir, that she would be so *distingué*, appearing in the character of *la belle sauvage*, reconciles all objections wonderfully. I think much better of the young creature than before. I do, really."

"No doubt you should; but Mr. Hillhouse—not to interrupt the pleasantness of your dreams—let me remark that war and love do not enjoy the same camping ground long, as they do not often employ the same weapons. The one is very apt to scare away the other. You, sir, have little time to lose. Are you aware that Lord Rawdon is in full retreat?"

“Retreat—from what?”

“The enemy—the rebels. He has been compelled to evacuate Ninety-Six.”

“Evacuate! what an unpleasant word!”

“You’ll find it so, unless you proceed in your attack with increased vigor. You will soon be compelled to evacuate Brier Park, leaving *la belle sauvage* to the care of other savages not so beautiful, and possibly something more dangerous.”

“You discompose my nerves, Captain Conway. May I learn if all this be true—be certain?”

“Too true: ask Mr. Gray. He brings me the intelligence. He has just received it.”

“Sure as a gun,” said Gray.

“And with quite as startling a report,” continued the outlaw. “What you do will need to be done quickly. You must press the siege.”

“Night and day,” added Watson Gray.

“You can’t stop for regular approaches,” continued Morton. “Remember you have nothing but field-works to contend with——”

“And, for——” added the surgeon, rubbing his hands with a gentle eagerness.

“Sap and storm at the same moment, Mr. Hillhouse. You must go through and over the works both; or expect to raise the siege very shortly. I doubt if you have three days left you. Lord Rawdon will be on his way for the Eutaw before that time.”

“My dear friend! you rejoice while you alarm me. I will not suffer any delay. But haste is so vulgar.”

“Except in flight.”

“Ah! even there; one can not dispose his garments well, and the face is flushed, and the manner is flurried. But there are cases of necessity——”

“Imperative necessity!”

“Yes; when we have to dispense with ordinary rules of conduct.”

“All active movements are of this sort, whether they contemplate flight or assault. Your affair combines both. You must

make your attack shortly, for *your* retreat must soon follow that of his lordship."

"True, most true!"

"And how honorable is it to carry off a prisoner even in flight!"

"It softens the necessity—it takes the shame from defeat."

"It redeems it," said the outlaw; "and such a prisoner, too! Ah! Mr. Hillhouse, you are certainly a man to be envied."

"My dear captain, you do most certainly flatter me. But I was born under a fortunate star. I have been thus fortunate always, and particularly among the sex. Remind me to relate to you some curious successes which I have had. But not now. I must leave you now. Forgive me that I am thus abrupt. But I go in obedience to your counsel. I go to prepare for the war. By the way, those metaphors of yours were well carried on. I shall endeavor to recall them at the first leisure; those, in which you spoke of the prosecution of my present purpose, by sap and storm, and so forth. I suspect, captain, that you, too, have been rather a fortunate person, in your own experience, among the women. But, *your* field has not been a difficult one. Women are very accessible in America, though I certainly do not agree with my old friend, but present enemy, the Marquis de Chastellux,* who says that a Frenchman may do anything with the women of your country."

"Does he say that?—the scoundrel!" exclaimed the outlaw, with a burst of provincial indignation.

"Now," continued the surgeon, "had he said Englishman for Frenchman, there would have been some reason in it; though it isn't every Englishman, either, of whom such a thing might be said."

The outlaw and his comrade both looked serious. The reply of the former was made with some effort at composure, and the "wreathed smile" upon his lips was the result of some struggle with his sterner passions.

"No, sir; the instances are not frequent, I suspect. But the

* For what the Marquis does say, see his "Travels in North America," New York edition, p. 260. The sample of complaisance is very French and amusing.

opinion may naturally be entertained in its full extent by one who has been, and is destined to be, so uniformly successful everywhere."

"Thank you, captain—you are too flattering. But I confess—I *have* had my successes—I have, Heaven knows!"—with an air of profound humility, as he bowed himself out of the apartment.—"Heaven knows, I have had successes which might well turn the heads of wiser men than myself."

"The ape!—the monstrous ape!" exclaimed Morton, "was there ever such an ape!"

"A long-eared ass!" muttered his more rude companion; "a long-eared ass, if ever there was one! If Miss Flora don't pull his ears, it won't be because she don't see 'em."

"No! It's devilish strange that such a fellow should preserve his follies amidst all his changes, and while pursuing a life which, more than any other, would be likely to lop off the affectations and conceits of boyhood."

"Well, I reckon," said Gray, "he's just like a great many others, who know they can't pass for wise men, and are determined to pass anyhow. A fool would rather you'd see him as a fool than not see him at all."

"Egad!" exclaimed Morton, with all the enthusiasm of a new idea, "Egad! I think I'll see this fellow at his follies. I'll make an effort, Gray, to get down stairs this very afternoon."

"Don't think of such a thing," said Gray.

"Ay, but I will! I feel strong enough for it, and a change of objects will do me good. I long to feast my eyes, also, upon the charms of the fair Flora. Zounds! had it been Clarence Conway, who lay sick and wounded in her dwelling, what a difference! She'd have deigned him a glance before this! She'd have sat beside his bed, and her hand would have been in his, and she would have played with his hair, and her long locks would have floated upon his cheek! Damnation! that fortune should thus smile upon one, and blast the other always! Thus has it been from our cradle. By heavens, Gray, I tell you, *that* man—boy and man—ay, when he was but a brat of an infant—a squeaking, squalling, unconscious brat of an infant—this jilting Jezebel, called Fortune, showered her gold and jewels

about him even then, and has clung to him ever since, with a constancy hardly ever known to any of her sex. All around seemed to toil in his behalf, everything tended to his benefit; ay, even when I toiled in his despite, I have been compelled to curse the vain labor which redounded only to his good! and I—”

“You’ve had your good fortune, too, captain!” said Gray, condolingly.

“Have I!” cried the other, dashing the mirror, upon which he had looked at that moment, into fragments at his feet; “have I, indeed? I must read it in these gashes, then! I must feel it in this feebleness; in these wounds which fetter my activity now, when safety, life, success, everything, depends upon my strength and freedom! No, no! Gray; my good fortune is yet to come!”

“Don’t distrust Fortune, captain. I’m thinking she’s been your friend quite as much as his. She’s helped him in some things, perhaps; but how is he any the better for them? As for Miss Flora doing for him what she wouldn’t do for you, that’s all in my eye. I reckon that she looks on him now a little blacker than she ever looked, or ever will look, on you. Well, what next? After all his fortunate gettings, where is he? And after all your misfortunes, where are you? Why, he’s just on the brink of losing everything, and you are just that nigh to getting all that he loses, and perhaps a great deal more.”

‘Would it were now!—would I were sure. But, Gray, I have my fears, my doubts. Past experience teaches me that good fortune is never more doubtful, than when it wears the sweetest and most promising countenance. We have to depend upon others. That is always the great drawback to a man’s chances. Should that fellow, Muggs, now fail us with his boats.”

“Don’t you fear. He will not fail.”

“And Flora! God! could I be sure of that!”

“And what’s to hinder? The one answers for the other.”

“Ay, not much to hinder, if we use violence. Main force may carry her off, and shall, unless she yields readily; but I tell you, Gray, I’d give half that I’m worth—half of all my spoils—but to be spared this one necessity.”

"What, captain, you're not getting mealy-mouthed in the business. Your conscience ain't troubling you, sure?"

"No! It's not that I have any scruples; but I would enjoy the blessing of a willing prize, Gray! That, that is everything!"

"Lord knows," rejoined the other with a yawn, "you had a willing prize enough in Mary Clarkson."

"Speak not of her, Gray," said the other in half-faltering accents—"not now! not now!"

"She was a willing prize, and one you were willing enough to get rid of. Give me the prize that *don't* consent in a hurry—that gives me some trouble to overcome. I wouldn't give a shilling for a wagon-load of that fruit that drops into the mouth the moment it opens for it."

"Nor I. Nor is that what I mean, Gray; I mean only that I should like to forbear absolute violence. I do not object to the opposition or the difficulty, if I could *win*, by my own wit, wisdom, attractions—win through her sympathies, and not by strife. And I must still try for this. I will see Flora this very evening. I will get down to the supper-table. I am strong enough for it; and I will see for myself how she manages this silly witling. The truth is, Gray, I'm not altogether satisfied that she will feel that scorn for the fellow that we feel.

We judge of a man according to his own manliness; but this is not the mode of judging among women. They look at the streamers of the ship, and her gaudy paint; while men look to see if her timbers are good; if she follows the helm, if she is taut, and trim, and steady upon the wave. I believe that where it depends upon a woman's heart—where her affections are firmly enlisted—she will be true to the death, and in spite of death; but, when the matter is referable only to the judgment, I lose all confidence in her. She is then to be watched narrowly, and guided cautiously, and kept from the breakers, among which she otherwise would be sure to run. Now, Flora Middleton is a woman whose mind will take a large share in her affections. She'll hardly suffer her feelings to get entirely beyond the control of her judgment; and it may be advisable that I should assist, at her next conference with this gudgeon, in

order to help him somewhat in the exposure of his more ridiculous qualities."

"It don't need, captain. I reckon she's seen 'em all for herself, long before this. You'd better not go down. Better keep all your strength for the time when you'll need it all."

"What! man! Do you think I could fail *then*? Impossible! No! no! Gray. You're getting quite too timid to be a safe counsellor, and I'm resolved to have a glance at Flora Middleton this evening, though I die for it. I think the sight of her will give me new strength and spirit. Besides, man, it is time that I should try my experiment upon her. If you are right—if she believes that Clarence Conway has been doing those evil deeds which I need not acknowledge, and has dismissed him for ever from her regards—then this is the very time to urge my claims and be successful. Personally, there is very little difference to the eye between us; unless these d——d scars! Ha! didn't you let her know that they were got fighting with Clarence in defence of injured innocence, and all that! If so, they will not seem so very uncomely. There is yet another circumstance, Gray: I flatter myself that the contrast between myself and her present suitor, the surgeon, even in his dove-colored breeches, will hardly be against me. Is not that something—are not all these things something? If I can *persuade* her, we diminish some of our labor, and several of our difficulties; and that must be tried *first*. I must play the lover as well as I can, before I play the conqueror. I must *woo* my bride, before I resort to the last mode of winning her."

"You'd better keep your bed two days longer."

"Pshaw! get me some proper clothes. I wish I had the pick of the surgeon's wardrobe, for, of a truth, Gray, I have but little choice of my own. I suspect my small clothes are of all colors, with the blood and dust of that last brush; but, no matter about the stains here and there; if you can only get me tolerably trim. I should rather be as unlike my popinjay rival as possible, on such an occasion."

The outlaw kept his resolution, in spite of all the exhortations of his comrade; and that evening, surprised the family, and the surgeon, Hillhouse, not the least, by his sudden entry into the *salle à manger*.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A VISION.

EDWARD MORRISON, could he have always kept his blood in abeyance, would have made a first-rate politician. He had superior cunning, but he had, at the same time, too much earnestness. He yielded himself quite too much up to his subject. He could not tamper and trifle with it. His impetuosity defeated his caution; and, in every respect in which he failed, he could reproach himself only as the true cause of his failure. The stuff which he had expressed in conversation with Watson Gray, about the influence of fortune, did not deceive himself. He knew better, whenever he permitted himself to think gravely, and speak honestly; but men get into a habit of deceiving themselves while seeking to deceive others; and fortune has always been compelled to bear the whining reproaches of mankind whenever their own wits go a-blundering. Pride makes them unwilling to admit the fault to be in themselves, and fortune is a good-natured damsel, who seldom resents the imputations cast upon her. They clamor accordingly, and without fear, at her expense; and grow familiar with the language of unprofitable and unintended declamation. It scarcely needs that we should remark how unfrequently they make acknowledgments of her bounty. When successful, it is their own excellent art, audacious courage, admirable skill, and manly accomplishment, that achieve the conquest; and the smile which denotes their satisfaction with all the world, betrays first the gratifying conviction that they themselves are good against all the world.

Edward Morton was by no means ignorant of his own defect of character. He knew his impetuosity of blood, and he feared it. It was necessary to guard particularly against *that*, in all his intercourse with Flora Middleton. Of this he had previous experience. He knew her acuteness of intellect. The very

simplicity of her own character, and the directness and almost masculine frankness of her temper, made it somewhat difficult to elude her analysis. Besides, she already suspected him. This he knew. He had every reason to suppose, in addition, that the late close intercourse between herself and Clarence Conway, however brief, had enabled the latter to afford her some information of the true state of their mutual feelings and interests.

But, in due proportion with the small amount of knowledge which he possessed, was the reasonable apprehension which he entertained of the extent of what she knew. She might know much or little. He had every reason to fancy that she knew *all*; and his chief hope lay in the fruitful falsehoods which his wily coadjutor had taken occasion to plant within her mind. If these falsehoods had taken root—if they flourished—perhaps the difficulty would not be great to make her doubt all the assertions of his brother.

“If she believes him this villain—well! She will believe more. She will believe that he has slandered me—nothing can be more natural—and if one task be well performed, it will not be hard to effect the other. But I must be wary. She is as keen-eyed as a hungry eagle—looks far and deep. One hasty word—one incautious look—and her sharp wit detects the error, and all must be begun anew. I must be cool now, or never. With everything at stake, I must school my blood into submission, if, indeed, I have not already lost enough to make the pains-taking unnecessary.”

Such were his thoughts, and such the hopes, upon which he founded his new purposes of deception. The surprise of all parties was great, and openly expressed, as he suddenly entered the supper-room. But the outlaw saw with pleasure that the surprise of the ladies did not seem coupled with any coldness or dissatisfaction. It has not been necessary for us to say, before, that Mrs. Middleton had visited the invalid in his chamber. She had done all the duties of hospitality and humanity. He had accordingly no cause of complaint. He could have no reason to expect the like attendance from the *young lady*; and the gentle courtesy of the latter would have convinced one even more sus-

picious than Morton, that she had no hostile feeling whatsoever at work against him.

The inquiries of both were kind and considerate. He was requested to occupy the sofa entirely, and to place himself at ease upon it; a permission which had the effect of transferring the reluctant person of the surgeon to a contiguous chair. The deportment of this person had been productive of far more surprise to the ladies, than the appearance of the outlaw. Flora Middleton had informed her grandmother of the suit which she had rejected; and it was, therefore, greatly to the wonder of the one, and the consternation of the other, that they were compelled to witness, in his deportment, the language of confident assurance;—of a success and exultation, in tone and manner, as unequivocal as ever betrayed themselves in the action of a triumphant lover. His smirking were not to be mistaken; and the old lady looked to the young one, and the young one returned the glance with equal vexation and bewilderment.

The arrival of Morton had the effect of bringing some relief to the females of the party, and possibly to diminish, in some degree, the impertinent self-complaisance of the surgeon. For this, the ladies were grateful to the outlaw; and hence, perhaps, the greater benignity of the reception which they bestowed upon the latter. But still there was quite enough of pleased impudence manifest in the visage of Hillhouse, even after the coming of Morton; and when the first courtesies which followed his entrance were fairly ended, he took occasion to say something on the subject to this happy person.

“Really, Mr. Hillhouse, I am surprised at the unusual degree of happiness which your countenance exhibits this evening. What is it makes you so peculiarly happy. Have you good news from the army? Is his lordship about to relieve you. Do you think of Charleston and the next Meschianza?”

The surgeon simpered, smiled anew, and looked with most provoking *empressment* at Flora Middleton. Before he could frame the intricate and exquisite reply which he was meditating, that young lady availed herself of the occasion, to prove, as well she might, that she was no willing party to the peculiar happiness which his countenance expressed

"I thank you for that question, Mr. Conway—I was about to make the same inquiry; for, really, I never saw a gentleman put on so suddenly the appearance of so much joy. I fancied that Mr. Hillhouse must have had a fairy gift, as, you know, happens to us all *in childhood*; and then again, I doubted, for there are reasons against such a notion. But, in truth, I knew not what to think, unless it be that it is surely no earthly joy which has produced, or could produce, so complete an expression of delight in the human face. I declare, Mr. Hillhouse, I should be glad for mamma's sake—if for the sake of no one else—that you would let us know what it is that makes you so supremely happy. There's nothing pleases old people so much, you know, as the innocent pleasures of young ones."

"Ah, Miss Flora, do *you* then ask? It is, indeed, no earthly joy which has made me happy."

"You are then really happy?" said Conway.

"Really, and in truth, I may say so. A dream——"

"What! and is it a dream only? Well, I thought as much," exclaimed Flora.

"Nay, Miss Middleton, life itself, for that matter, is a sort of dream. But, in ordinary speech, mine is not a dream. I have had a vision——"

"A vision!" exclaimed Conway.

"A vision, sir!" said the old lady, putting on her spectacles, and looking around the room.

"A vision! Do you see it now, Mr. Hillhouse? Where? What was it like?" The demand of Flora was made with all the girlish eagerness of one who really believed in the prophetic faculty of the present seer.

"Yes, what was it like, Mr. Hillhouse?" asked the outlaw, "I am very curious to hear! a vision!"

"Like!" exclaimed the surgeon, "like! like an opening of heaven upon me. A sudden revelation of delight, a cloud of glory; and the shape within was that of—a woman!"

"Dear me!—only a woman!" exclaimed Morton, affectedly.

"Only a woman, sir!" cried the surgeon, with an air of profoundest gallantry; "and what lovelier object can one see in this visible creation—upon the earth or in the sky——"

“Or the waters under the earth.”

“Nay, I’m not so deep in the world, Mr. Conway,” said the surgeon; “but when you ejaculate in wonder, sir, because my vision of unspeakable delight takes the shape of a young and beautiful woman——”

“What’s the color of her eyes—and hair, Mr. Hillhouse?” was the interruption of Conway. “Give us now a just description, that we may judge for ourselves what sort of taste you have in matters of beauty.”

Hillhouse looked to Flora Middleton with an expression which said, as plainly as a look could say—“Behold with me! The vision is again before us!”

Flora Middleton rose from her chair. She seemed to anticipate the words; and the scorn and vexation which overspread her features, became evident to all persons in the room, except, perhaps, the single obtuse individual who had provoked them. She was about to leave the apartment, when the sudden and hurried words of Edward Morton arrested her, with a new occasion of wonder, more legitimate than that which the surgeon entertained.

“By heavens, Mr. Hillhouse, I too have a vision, and one far less lovely, I think, than yours. Pray, look to that door, if you please. There was a strange visage at it but a moment ago. Look! look!—a man, not a woman; and one not from heaven. I should think, though it may be——”

Before the surgeon could reach the door, or Morton could finish the sentence, a dark figure entered the room, confronted the party, and taking from his face a black mask, with which it was covered displayed to the anxious gaze of the outlaw his own late lieutenant, and always bitter enemy, Captain Stockton. The latter had heard what Morton said, and concluded his speech perhaps, in the most fitting manner.

“From hell, you would say, would you! and you are right, sir. I came from hell, and I am come for *you*. You are prepared for travel, I trust!”

The behavior of Morton was equally fearless and dignified. He had a game to play in the eyes of Flora, and a difficult part to act in more eyes than hers. His agitation had not been con-

cealed, at the first sudden exhibition which Stockton had made of his hostile visage at the entrance; but, when the person of the intruder was no longer doubtful, his firmness came back to him; and no person, on the verge of the precipice, could have looked down with more indifference than he, upon its awful abysses. He raised himself with composure from the sofa, and directing the eyes of Stockton to the ladies, calmly remarked—

“Whatever you may be, and whatever your purpose, as a man, remember where you are, and be civil to the ladies.”

He was answered by a grin, and yell of mingled exultation and malice.

“Ay! ay! I will remember. Don’t suppose I shall ever forget them, or yourself, or even that pink-looking gentleman in the corner, who smells so sweetly, and looks so frightened. Ha! ha! Did you ever know the devil to forget any of his flock. Ladies, you know me, or you should. You will know me soon enough. I am old Nick, himself, you may be sure of that, though I go by several names. My most innocent one is perhaps the most familiar to you. I am the captain of the Black Riders. *Do you deny that?*” he demanded, at the close, turning full upon Edward Morton.

It did not need that the latter should answer this inquiry, for the alarm which this bold annunciation produced, prevented his words from being heard by any ears but those of the intruder.

“You may be the devil himself, for anything I know or care.”

“Indeed! you are bold. But we shall see. You will find me a worse person to deal with, perhaps. You are my prisoner: remember that.”

“I know not that!” exclaimed Morton, rising with evident pain from the sofa, upon which he had sunk but a minute before, and looking the defiance which he had no means to enforce. His attitude was, however, threatening; and drawing a pistol from his belt, the intruding outlaw levelled it full at the head of his superior. The eye of Morton did not shrink. His gaze was undaunted. Not a muscle of his face was discomposed. At that instant Watson Gray suddenly entered the apartment, strode between them, and confronted Stockton with a weapon

like his own. At the same time he thrust another into the hands of Morton.

"There are two to play at this game, Stockton," was the cool remark of Gray. "Ladies, leave the room, if you please. We need no witnesses: and you, sir, unless you can kill as well as cure, you may as well follow the ladies."

This was addressed to the surgeon.

"I have no weapon," was his answer.

"Pshaw! look to the fireplace. A brave man never wants a weapon."

Hillhouse possessed himself of the poker with sufficient resolution; but he evidently looked with great dissatisfaction upon the prospect before him, of soiling his dove-colored suit in an unexpected *melee*. Meanwhile the ladies had disappeared, and the only social influence which might have prevented bloodshed was necessarily removed in their departure.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A PARLEY.

"WHAT does all this mean, Stockton?" demanded Gray.

"What you see. The meaning's plain enough, Watson Gray," was the insolent reply.

"Ay, I see well enough that you are disposed to murder your superior; but on what pretence? How will you answer to Lord Rawdon for this insubordination—this mutiny? for it is no less. Captain Morton has the commission of Sir Henry Clinton. He is your commander."

"Yes, but he is the property of the troop, also."

"Well, what then—suppose we allow that?"

"That is enough. He is a traitor to them."

"Ha!—a traitor!"

"Yes! a base, dishonest traitor."

"How? in what way is he a traitor?"

"He is sworn to be true to them."

"Well—if to be mangled in their battles is to be true to them, he certainly has been true a long time."

"Mangled in *their* battles!" quoth the other, with a sneer. "Mangled in his own. Had he been fighting their battles, with less regard to his own, he would have escaped his mangling. 'Tell that to the marines.' We know better. We know that he is a traitor to his comrades. He has sold them for a price, and has abandoned them to their enemies. His life is forfeit by his own laws."

"This is a mere fetch, Stockton. There is no ground for such pretence. You are the enemy of Captain Morton. We all know that of old. You are contriving it against him to destroy him. Beware! You know me quite as well as I know you. I tell you, that if you go one inch on either hand from the right, your neck stretches on the gallows in the sight of all Charleston!"

"Pshaw! Watson Gray. You don't hope to frighten me at this time of day with your big words. I know what I'm about. Captain Morton is a traitor to the troop, and we'll prove it. He is false to his oath, and will be made to answer all its penalties."

"That's well enough; but what gives you the right, till the thing's proved, to lift pistol to his head?"

"The thing's proved already."

"What! without a trial?"

"We've two witnesses against him."

"Where are they? We'll hear them—not you. You are a little too fast."

"You shall hear them both. You shall hear *me* too. I am now the captain of the troop. They have made me so by their free voices. *He* is nothing, now, but one of us—a common soldier, under suspicion, and waiting for his sentence."

"Look you, Stockton: I'm better used to acting than talking. I know you of old, and I see you're bent to kill your captain, whether or no. You're hungering to step into his shoes: but the moment you pull trigger on him, that moment I pull trigger on you. There's two to one. Take your chance now for life; for I'm getting angry."

"Two to one, indeed! Look at the windows, man, and you'll see *twenty* to one," was the triumphant response of Stockton.

Gray looked as he was bidden, so did the surgeon Hillhorse, but Morton kept his eyes fixed upon those of his lieutenant.

"Well, do you see? are you satisfied?. There is no chance for you," said the latter.

"I see only what I expected to see," was the answer of Gray. "I did not look to see you venture here without good backing. I knew you too well for that. These twenty men are enough to eat us up. But, before you can get help from them, we'll make mince-meat of you. You are a fool if you think otherwise."

Stockton looked upon his destined victim with equal rage and disappointment.

"What! you refuse, then, to surrender him to me?"

"We do."

"Well, we shall see what we can do with a few more pistols," replied the ruffian, and with these words he prepared to leave the room. But Gray placed himself between him and the entrance.

"Stay," said he—"not so fast. You've got into the cane-brake with the bear. You must ask permission when you want to leave it."

"What! do you mean to keep me?"

"Yes; you shall be a hostage for the rest. We must have terms between us, Richard Stockton, before we let you off."

"What terms?" demanded the other, angrily.

"Where's our guard?"

"Fastened up in the loghouse, where they're all drunk."

"They must be released; and you must answer to Lord Rawdon for making his soldiers drunk and incapable, while on duty at a British military post."

"Who says I made them drunk?"

"I say so."

"You can not prove it."

"You shall see. If I can prove that one of your troopers did it, it will be necessary for you to show that you did not employ that trooper in doing it."

“Watson Gray, I will have satisfaction out of you for this.”

“All in good time, Stockton. You don't suppose that I'm likely to dodge from a difficulty with you or any man? But it's useless for you to ride your high horse across my path. By the Eternal, man, I'll tilt you into the ditch in the twinkle of a mosquito!”

“You talk boldly; but let me tell you that you're not altogether safe from this charge against Morton. You're suspected of treason to the troop, as well as he.”

“Tsha, tsha, tsha! Catch old birds with chaff! Look you, Stockton: don't you suppose you can carry this matter as you please, either by scare or shot. We're up to you any how. Now, look you: if you think that either Captain Morton or myself wants to escape from trial, you're mistaken. But we'll have a fair trial, or none at all.”

“Well, won't we give him a fair trial?”

“No: not if you begin it with the pistol.”

“I only want to make him a prisoner.”

“Well, you sha'n't have your wishes in that—not while I can stand ready with such a muzzle as this close upon yours. Now, hear me. Give orders to Ensign Darcy, whose little eyes I see dancing at that glass there, and who's at the bottom of all your mischief—give him orders to let our men loose from the loghouse, and send them here; and, in the mean time, let him draw his own men off from the house. When that's done, we'll come to terms about the trial.”

“Agreed,” said the other, and he made a new movement as if to take his departure, but the wily Gray was still on the alert.

“No! no!—my good fellow!—You must stay as a hostage, lieutenant, 'til the matter's all arranged. You can speak to Darcy from where you stand—through the pane as well as if your arm was round his neck.”

The vexation of Stockton may be imagined. He strove vainly to suppress it. He was compelled to submit. Darcy was summoned, and would have entered, with his men following, but Watson Gray's prompt accents warned him, that, if he came not alone, he would bring down on the head of his confederate

the bullets of himself and Morton. Sharing the chagrin of his superior, Darcy, accordingly, made his appearance alone, and received his instructions.

When he had drawn off his followers, and disappeared himself, Gray persuaded Morton to retire to his chamber with the assistance of the surgeon. This measure had, perhaps, become absolutely necessary to the former. The efforts which he had made to sustain himself, as well in the interview with the ladies, as in that unexpected one which followed it;—and the excitement which the latter necessarily occasioned, had nearly exhausted him. Nothing but the moral stimulus derived from his mind—its hate, scorn, defiance—sustained him so far from fainting on the spot; and this support did not maintain him much longer. He did faint when he reached his own apartment.

“And now, Stockton,” said Gray, when they were alone together—“what’s all this d—d nonsense stuff about Captain Morton’s treachery and mine? Out with it, man, that we may know the game.”

“No nonsense stuff, I assure you. The proof is strong enough against him, and brushes your skirts also.”

“Proof indeed. You see, I don’t stop to let you know, lieutenant, that I look upon you as a man that will contrive, wherever you can, against the captain. I know that you hate him—you can’t deny it,—though it’s the strangest thing to me why you should hate a man who has never given you any cause for hate, and has always treated you well and kindly.”

“Indeed! Do you really think so!” exclaimed the other bitterly. “Well, I shall understand, that, to knock a man over with the butt of your pistol, and send him afterward under guard to prison, with a recommendation for the halbirds, is a way to treat well and kindly.”

“Pshaw! Is that all?”

“All! ay, and enough too!”

“My good fellow, you ought to be grateful that he didn’t set you a swinging from the first tree. I heard of that affair, and was sorry for it; but you deserved all you got, and something more. He might have hung you without trial, or shot you down where you stood. You were in absolute mutiny.”

“ We’ll say no more about that, Watson Gray. He’s had his chance, and I’ll have mine. So far from it’s being nonsense stuff which is against him, the proof of his treachery is clear as noonday.”

“ Well, prove it, and he must stand his fate. All he asks, and all that I ask, is a fair trial. But what is the sort of treachery that he’s been doing ?”

“ Making arrangements to fly and leave the troop in the lurch. Getting boats to carry off the plate and negroes from Middleton barony and other places, without letting the troop come to a share. You can’t deny that’s death by our laws—rope and bullet !”

“ Granted : but, again, I ask you, where’s the proof ?”

“ Brydone !—Ha ! you start, do you ? You didn’t expect that ?”

“ Start !—a man may well start at hearing of such a falsehood from the lips of a fellow like Brydone, who was always counted one of the truest fellows we ever had.”

“ Yes ; you didn’t think *he’d* desert you, eh ?”

“ Desert !—Look you, Stockton, I don’t believe that Brydone ever said such a word. Did you hear him yourself ?”

“ Yes—I did.”

“ Where is he ? Bring him before me.”

“ Time enough. He’s not here with us at present. But he’ll be here sooner than you wish.”

“ Ah !”—and the scout paused, while his brow gathered into deep, dark folds which indicated the pressure of accumulating thoughts. He suddenly recovered his composure, and turning, with a quiet smile upon his more blunt companion, he proceeded :—

“ Stockton, I see your game. I need not tell you that I am now convinced that you have no such proof, and that Brydone never told you anything hurtful to the captain. If so, didn’t you know that he was to have a fair trial ?—Why didn’t you bring your only witness ? and did not you also know, that, by the laws, no one could be found guilty but by two witnesses ? Now, you only speak of one——”

“ Ay, ay ! but there’s another, Watson Gray. Don’t suppose

I got so far ahead of common sense in this business as to *stumble* in that matter. No! no! I hate Ned Morton too much—too thoroughly and bitterly—to leave my desire for revenge to a doubtful chance. The whole matter was *cut and dry* before we came down from ‘Ninety-Six.’ We have two witnesses of his guilt.”

“Well, who’s the other?” asked Gray with seeming indifference.

“Isaac Muggs!”

“What Isaac, the one-armed! But you don’t call him a man, surely—he’s only part of a man!”

“You don’t mean to stand for such an argument as that?” demanded Stockton gravely.

“Oh, no!” responded the other with a laugh. “Let him go for what he’s worth. But——”—here his indifference of manner seemed to increase, as, yawning, he inquired—

“But when are these witnesses to be here? When may we confront them?”

“Sooner than you wish,” was the reply. “We look for Brydone to-morrow, by the dawn; and as for Isaac Muggs, we expect to catch him very soon after, if not before. We hope to be in readiness along the river banks, to see whether he brings up the boats which are fit to carry such a valuable cargo, as you’ve got ready here to put in them.”

“Ah!—so you’ve got the Congaree under guard, have you?” demanded the other with the same seeming indifference of manner.

“It will be somewhat difficult for him to find *you* without first finding *us*,” replied Stockton with a chuckling sort of triumph.

“So much for Isaac, then. I suppose he brings Brydone along with him?” was the carelessly expressed inquiry of Gray.

“No! no! He will be more certain to arrive, and comes more willingly. Rawdon despatched him below with a letter to Colonel Stewart, at Fairlawn, and he will be here too soon for your liking. He comes by the road. Do not think we ventured upon this business without preparation. We made nice calculations and timed everything to the proper moment. Brydone

sleeps to-night at Martin's tavern, so we may expect him here by sunrise. We'll be ready, at all events, for the trial by twelve o'clock to-morrow. At least we can take his testimony and wait for Muggs. But I calculate on both before that time."

Watson Gray seemed for a moment lost in thought. His dark bushy brows were bent down almost to the concealment of his eyes.

"It seems to worry you!" said Stockton with a sneer.

"Worry me! No! no! Stockton, you're only worrying yourself. I was thinking of a very different matter," replied the other with a good-natured smile.

"Well, do you say that you'll be ready for the trial then?"

"We're ready *now*; ready always for fair play. But you must draw off your troop."

"Very well. I have no objection to that, for I can draw 'em on again at a moment's warning. If you don't keep faith you'll sweat for it. I'm agreed to anything that don't prevent the trial. Where shall it be—here?"

"Here! Oh, no! To have your sixty men rushing upon us at close muzzle-quarters! No, no! We'll have it in the woods, near the river, where my half-score of muskets may be covered by the trees, and be something of a match for your troop. Besides, the women, you know!"

"Well, I'm willing. There's a clayey bluff just above, facing the river-bend. There's something of an opening, and I reckon it's a sort of graveyard. I see a new grave there and a cross upon it. Let the trial be there."

"A new grave and a cross upon it!" mused the other. "That must be Mary Clarkson's grave; but the cross! Ah! perhaps Miss Flora had that done. She's a good girl! Well, I'm agreed. Let it be there—just at the turning of the sun at noon."

"Keep your word, Gray, and the worst enemy of Ned Morton——"

"Yourself!"

"The same! His worst enemy can ask nothing more. If we don't convict him——"

"You'll swallow the Congaree!"

"You may laugh now, but I doubt if you will to-morrow;

and I know that Ned Morton will be in no humor to laugh, unless he does so because he likes dancing in air much better than most people."

"Well, well, Stockton; we shall soon see enough. To-morrow's never a day far off, and here comes Darcy to relieve you. But as for your hanging Ned Morton, why, man, your own troop will hardly suffer it."

"Ha! will they not? Is that your hope?" said Stockton, with an exulting sneer.

"Perhaps!" replied the other, with a smile.

The entrance of Darcy arrested the conference.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A WITNESS SILENCED.

THE business of the two had reached its close before the return of Darcy with the British guard which he had released. Some other matters were adjusted between them, and Lieutenant Stockton was at length permitted to depart, while Watson Gray, at the same moment, received from Darcy the still half drunken soldiery. It may be supposed that neither Stockton nor Darcy was altogether so well satisfied with the result of their expedition. The game was fairly in their hands; but the precipitation of Stockton, arising from a too great feeling of security, and a desire to exult over his threatened victim, led to that exposure of his own person of which Watson Gray so readily availed himself. The reproaches of the subordinate were not spared.

"But it comes to the same thing," said Stockton. "He is still ours. He is pledged to appear at the trial."

"Ay, but suppose he does not come?"

"Then the delay follows, and no worse evil. We have men enough, surely, to pull the old house about his ears."

“With the loss of half of them! A dear bargain,” replied the dissatisfied lieutenant.

Not so bad either. We can starve them out in three days. But there’s no fear that Gray will not keep his word. They will come to the trial. They flatter themselves that we shall see nothing of Isaac Muggs, whom they’ve sent away, and I told them of no other witness than Brydone. I said nothing of that skulk, Joe Tanner. He and Brydone are enough, and knowing the absence of Muggs, they’ll come boldly on the ground, and walk headlong into the trap we’ve set for them.”

“It’s well you’ve had that caution, Stockton; for, of a truth, you have so far played your cards most rashly. We’ve got desperate men to deal with, and that Watson Gray has got more sense in one little finger than you carry in your whole body.”

“That’s not so civil, Mr. Darcy.”

“No! but it’s true; and when you’re trifling with the game of both of us, it’s necessary to jerk you up suddenly with a sharp truth now and then, by way of a curb to your paces. There’s another matter that your proceeding has spoiled, Stockton.”

“What was that?”

“The gutting of the house.”

“Oh! that follows, of course.”

“A bird in the hand, you know. They may have time now to hide away the valuables.”

“It will be a close hole that our boys can’t creep into. Where they’ve gone we can follow. But there’s no doubt, Darcy, that I’ve given up one chance which befriended us. It’s only putting off for to-morrow what might have been done to-day. Our appetite will be only so much the keener for the delay. Did you see Miss Middleton?”

“Ay—did I not!” replied Darcy. “Look you, Stockton, I stipulate for *her*. You must not think to swallow all—rank, revenge, riches—and still yearn for beauty. She must go to my share of the booty.”

“Yours! Pooh, Darcy! what should give you an amorous tooth? Don’t think of it, my good fellow. I’ve set my mind upon her. It’s a part of my revenge. She’s the game that’s turned Ned Morton’s head—it was to disgrace him before her

that made me blunder—and unless I show him that she, too, is at my mercy, my triumph will be only half complete.”

Darcy muttered something about the “lion’s share,” and his muttering reminded Stockton that he was too valuable an assistant to be trifled with.

“Pshaw!” he exclaimed, “let us not squabble about a woman. I don’t care a shilling about her. But she’s common stock, you know. It must be according to the will of the troop.”

We forbear listening to other heads of their private arrangements. They proceeded to rejoin their men and to see about the disposition of their sentinels, in secrecy, along the banks of the river, wherever they thought it probable that a boat could effect a landing. They did not bestow a very close watch along the land side, or in the immediate neighborhood of the house, for they well knew that Morton could not escape, in his present condition of feebleness, by any but a water conveyance. He was their chief object, and they regarded his fate as now unavoidable.

The safety of the landlord, Muggs, it has been already seen, was secured by the persevering and sleepless efforts of his new comrade, John Bannister. When the latter had swam the river, and joined him on the other side, the two laid themselves quietly down to sleep in a place of security, having resolved to get up at an early hour, before dawn, and, urging their boat up stream with united paddles, keep on the same side of the river until they could, without detection, cross to that on which the enemy lay. Their aim was to reach a point above the usual landing places of the barony, and out of the reach, accordingly, of the line of sentinels, each of which John Bannister had beheld when he was placed.

The worthy scout was resolved to do all that he might, at any risk, for the safety of Flora, and for her rescue from the ruthless villains by whom her house was surrounded. He did not conjecture the state of affairs between the former captain of the Black Riders and his troop; and did not fancy that there was any cause of apprehension for the fate of Edward Conway, though such a conviction would have given him but little uneasiness.

At the appointed hour he awakened his companion, struck a light, reloaded his rifle, the flint of which he carefully examined; and, having put himself and Muggs in as good condition for a conflict as possible, he shoved his canoe up the stream.

The work was hard, but they achieved it. They plied their paddles vigorously, until they were enabled, with the help of the current, to round the jutting headland where slept the remains of Mary Clarkson. They had scarcely pulled into shore when they were startled by the sudden rising of a human figure from the earth, out of the bosom of which, and almost at their feet, he seemed to emerge. Bannister pushed back from the shore, but the friendly voice of Jake Clarkson reassured him. He had effected his escape, in the general drunkenness of the soldiery, though how that had been brought about, he could tell but little. Those who had drugged their cups, had evidently confounded him with the rest, for they furnished him with a portion of the potent beverage also. Of this he drank nothing, and the consequence of his sobriety was his successful effort at escape. In the darkness, he had been enabled to feel his way to the spot where his daughter slept.

He could give no further explanation; nor did Bannister annoy him on the subject. He was content with the acquisition of a stout fellow, whose aim was deadly, and who had contrived to secure his rifle from loss in all his several mischances. This he still carried upon his arm, and Bannister contented himself with instructing him to get it in readiness.

“See to the flint and priming, daddy Jake, for the time’s a-coming when I wouldn’t have you miss fire for the best pole-boat on the Congaree.”

If there was toil among these honest fellows, and among the outlaws in the neighborhood of whose camp they were hovering, there was toil and anxiety also in the dwelling, to which, though with different feelings, the eyes of both these parties were directed. Sleepless and prayerful were the hours which the fair ladies of the mansion passed after that wild and fearful interruption which they experienced in the progress of the evening meal. But, in the chamber of Edward Morton, a more stern and immovable sentiment of apprehension prevailed to increase

the gloom of his midnight watch, and to darken the aspects of the two who sat there in solemn conference.

Watson Gray, though he naturally strove to infuse a feeling of confidence into the mind of his superior, could not, nevertheless, entirely divest his thoughts of the sombre tinge which they necessarily took from his feelings, in considering the events which the coming day was to bring forth. There was something excessively humbling to a man like Edward Morton, in the idea of ever being tried for treachery by those whom he had so often led;—and to be placed for judgment before one whom he so heartily despised as Stockton, was no small part of the annoyance. The assurances which Watson Gray gave him did not touch this part of his disquietude. The simple assurance of his ultimate release could not materially lessen the pang which he felt at what he conceived to be the disgrace of such a situation.

“Life or death, Gray,” he said, “is after all a trifling matter. I have the one here,” touching the hilt of a dirk which he had just placed within his bosom, “or here,” and his fingers rested on the handle of the pistol which lay beside him on the bed.

“Either of these will secure me from the indignity which this base scoundrel would delight to fasten upon me; and, as for life, I believe I love it no more than any other soldier who knows the condition of the game he plays and the value of the stake he lays down. But, to be hauled up and called to answer to such a scamp, for such a crime, is, really, a most shocking necessity. Can't we mend the matter no way? Can't we tamper with some of the men? There are a few whom you could manage. There's Butts, both the Maybins, Joe Sutton, Peters, and half a dozen more that were always devoted to me, though, perhaps, among the more timid of the herd. If you could manage these; if you could persuade them to join us *here*, with your bull-head British allies, we should be able to make fight, and finish the copartnership in that manlier way. By Heaven, I'm stirred up with the notion! You must try it! I shall be strong enough for anything when the time comes; and I feel, that in actual conflict with that villain Stockton, I could not help but hew him to pieces. Bring us to this point, Gray!

Work, work, man, if you love me! If your wits sleep, wake them. Now or never! Let them save me from this d—nable situation and bitter shame.”

The confederate shook his head despondingly.

“No doubt if we could get at these fellows, or any half dozen in the troop, they might be bought over or persuaded in some way to desert to us; but do you not see that the difficulty is in getting at them? Were I to venture among them, I should be served just as I served Stockton to-night. I should be hampered hand and foot, with no such chance of making terms of escape as he had. No, captain, I see no way to avoid the trial. You must make up your mind to *that*. But I don't see that you will have anything more to apprehend. Muggs is out of the way, and won't be back in three days. He's safe. One witness is not enough, and as for Brydone—”

“D—n him! D—n him! The double-dyed traitor! And he was paid so well too!”

“That was the mistake, I'm thinking. He got too much for that last business. He considered it the last job that you'd ever give him, and he immediately cast about for a new employer. He's got him, but I do not think he'll keep him long.”

“May they cut each other's throats!” was the devout prayer of the outlaw, to which Gray responded with a deliberate

“Amen!”

What was further said between the two that night, was of the same temper and concerned the same business. Their hopes and fears, plans and purposes, so far as Watson Gray deemed it essential that his principal should know them, underwent, as it was natural they should, a prolonged examination. But Gray felt that the outlaw would need all his strength for whatever events might follow, and determined, therefore, upon leaving him to repose. Besides, he had some schemes working in his mind, which he did not declare to his principal, and which it was necessary that he should discuss entirely to himself.

He had already taken care that his score of men, by this time quite sobered, should be strictly cautioned on the subject of their watch for the night, and so placed, within the dwelling, as to baffle any attempt at surprise or assault from without. The soldiers

did not now need much exhortation to vigilance. They had already had some taste of the fruits of misbehavior, as in their beastly incapability of resentment, the outlaws had amused themselves with a rough pastime at their expense, in which cuffs and kicks were the most gentle courtesies to which the victims were subjected.

Having exhorted them, with every possible counsel and argument, Gray summoned the surgeon, Hillhouse, to a brief conference, and assigned to him certain duties of the watch also. Though a frivolous, foolish person, he was temperate, and the chief object of Gray was to keep the soldiers from any excess during an absence which, it seems, he meditated, but which he did not declare to them, or to his associate, Morton. It was only necessary to intimate to Mr. Hillhouse what havoc the Black Riders would make if they could once lay hands upon his variegated wardrobe, to secure all the future vigilance of that gentleman.

All matters being arranged to his satisfaction, Gray stole forth at midnight from the mansion, none knowing and none suspecting his departure; and, with the practised arts of a veteran scout, he contrived to take from the stables the fleetest horse which they contained. Him he led, as quietly as he could, into the woods which lay to the west, and remote equally from the encampment and sentinels of the Black Riders. Their watch was maintained with strictness, but only on the river side; and, uninterrupted, Gray soon succeeded in placing himself in full cover of the forests, and out of the neighborhood of the enemy's sentinels. He kept within the cover of the woods only so long as sufficed for safety; then, hurrying into the main road, he pursued his way down the country, at a rapid canter.

The object of Watson Gray, in part, may be conjectured, by a recurrence to that portion of the dialogue which he had with Stockton, in which the latter accounted for the absence of Brydone, the most important witness whom he could array against the fidelity of Captain Morton. He determined to go forth, meet Brydone, and bribe, or dissuade him from his meditated treachery. He had, if the reader will remember, wormed out of the less acute and subtle Stockton, the cause of Brydone's ab-

sence; the route which he would take, and the probable time of his arrival in the morning. To keep him back from the approaching trial he believed to be more important than he allowed to appear to Morton. He knew that their enemies would not be able to secure the testimony of Muggs, the landlord, within the allotted time, even if they succeeded, finally, in securing his person;—and he did not doubt that Stockton was prepared with some other witness, of whom he said nothing, in order the more effectually to delude the defendant into the field. This was, indeed, the case, as we have already seen from the conference between Stockton and his more subtle confederate, Darcy.

“At all events,” soliloquized the scout, “at all events, it will be the safe policy to keep Brydone out of the way. I must send him on another journey. He sleeps at Martin’s tavern. Let me see;—Martin’s is but fourteen miles. He can ride that at a dog-trot in three hours. He will probably start at daylight, and calculate to take his breakfast at the barony. That is Stockton’s calculation. I must baffle him. Brydone must put off eating that breakfast.”

Watson Gray did not continue his horse at the same pace at which he started. He drew up, after the first five miles, and suffered him to trot and walk alternately. He had not gone more than seven, when day broke upon the forests, and the keen eyes of the scout were then set to their best uses, as he surveyed the road upon which he travelled. By the time the sun rose he had gone quite as far as he intended. It was not a part of his policy to be seen at Martin’s tavern; or seen at all, by any one, who might reveal the fact hereafter that he had gone upon the same road over which Brydone was expected.

No man was better able to foresee, and provide against all contingencies, than Watson Gray. His every step was the result of a close calculation of its probable effects for good and evil. He quietly turned into the woods, when he had reached a thicket which promised him sufficient concealment for his purposes. Here he re-examined his pistols, which were loaded, each, with a brace of bullets. He stirred the priming with his finger, rasped the flints slightly with the horn handle of his knife, and adjusted the weapons in his belt for convenient use.

He did not dismount from his saddle, but took care to place himself in such a position, on the upper edge of the thicket, as to remain unseen from below; while, at the same time, the path was so unobstructed from above as to permit him to emerge suddenly, without obstruction from the undergrowth, at any moment, into the main track.

In this position he was compelled to wait something longer than he had expected. But Watson Gray, in the way of business, was as patient as the grave. He was never troubled with that fidgety peevishness which afflicts small people, and puts them into a fever, unless the winds rise from the right quarter at the very moment when they are desired to blow. He could wait, not only without complaint or querulousness; but he prepared himself to *wait*, just as certainly as to *perform*. To suffer and to endure, he had sufficient common sense philosophy to perceive, was equally the allotment of life.

His patience was sufficiently tested on the present occasion. He waited fully two hours, and with no greater sign of discontent, than could be conjectured from his occasionally transferring his right and then his left leg from the stirrup to the pommel of his saddle, simply to rest the members, as they happened to be more or less stiffened by the want of exercise. All the while, his eyes keenly pierced the thicket below him, and his ears pricked up, like his steed's, which he also cautiously watched, with the habitual readiness of a practised woodman. At length the tedium of his situation was relieved. The tramp of a horse was heard at a small distance, and as the traveller came up to the thicket, Watson Gray quietly rode out beside him.

"Ha! Watson Gray!" exclaimed the new-comer, who was the person expected.

"The same, Joe Brydone," was the answer of Gray, in tones which were gentle, quiet, and evidently intended to soothe the alarm of the other; an alarm which was clearly conveyed in his faltering accents, and in the sudden movement of his bridle hand, by which his steed was made to swerve away to the opposite side of the road.

If his object was flight, it did not promise to be successful for the powerful and fleet animal he strode by Gray left him no

hope to escape by running from his unwelcome companion. This he soon perceived; and, encouraged perhaps by the friendly accent of Gray's voice, was content to keep along with him at the same pace which he was pursuing when they encountered. But his looks betrayed his disquiet. He had all the misgivings of the conscious traitor, apprehensive for his treasonable secret. On this head Gray did not leave him very long in doubt.

"I've been looking for you, Brydone."

"Ah! why—what's the matter?"

"Nay, nothing much, I reckon, only—you're expected at the barony."

"I know:—I'm on my way there now."

"Ned Morton expects you!"

"Who: the captain?" with some surprise.

"Yes! a base charge is made against him by that scoundrel Stockton, and he wants you to disprove it."

"What's that?" demanded the other.

"Why, neither more nor less, than that the captain has been making preparations to desert the troop, in violation of his oath."

"Well, but Gray, that's the truth, you know," said Brydone with more confidence.

"How! I know!—I know nothing about it."

"Why, yes you do. Didn't you send me yourself to Isaac Muggs, and tell me what to say and do?"

"Brydone, you're foolish. If I sent you, didn't I pay you for going; and isn't it a part of our business that you should keep the secret if you keep the money? You got paid for going, and got paid for keeping the secret; and now we expect you to go up and prove this fellow Stockton to be a liar and an ass."

"I can't do it, Gray," said the other, doggedly.

"And why not? There are more guineas to be got where the last came from."

"I don't know that," was the reply.

"But you shall see. I promise you twenty guineas, if you will swear to the truth, as I tell it to you, on this trial."

"I can't, Gray. I've told the truth already to Captain Stockton and to more than him."

"But you were under a mistake, Brydone, my good fellow Don't be foolish now. You will only be making a lasting enemy of Captain Morton, who has always been your friend, and who will never forget your treachery, if you appear in this business against him."

"His enmity won't count for much when they've tried him, Gray. He must swing."

"But mine will count for something. Would you be making an enemy of me, also? If you go forward and swear against him, you swear against me too."

"I can't help it—it's the truth."

"But where's the necessity of telling the truth at this time of day? What's the use of beginning a new business so late in life? You've told Stockton, it seems; go forward then, and downface him that you never told him a word on the subject, and I will be your security for twenty guineas."

"I can't;—I told Lieutenant Darcy also, and several others."

"Ah! that's bad—that's very bad. My dear Brydone, that's unfortunate for all of us."

"I don't see how it's unfortunate for more than him," said Brydone, with recovered coolness.

"Why yes, it's a loss to you; a loss of money, and, perhaps, something as valuable. But there's yet a way by which you may mend it, and prevent the loss. You shall have the twenty guineas, if you'll just take the back track down the country, and be gone for five days. I don't care where you go, or what you do in the meantime, so that you don't come within twenty miles of the barony."

"I can't think of it," said the other obstinately.

Watson Gray regarded him earnestly, for a few moments, before he continued.

"How a fellow of good sense will sometimes trifle with his good fortune, and risk everything on a blind chance. Joe Brydone, what's got into you, that you can't see the road that's safest and most profitable?"

"Perhaps I do," replied the other with a grin of the coolest self-complaisance.

He was answered by a smile of Gray, one of that sinister

kind which an observing man would shudder to behold in the countenance of a dark and determined one.

"Brydone," he said, "let me give you some counsel—the last, perhaps, I shall ever give you. You're in the way of danger if you go up to the barony. There will be hot fighting there to-day. Captain Morton's friends won't stand by and see him swing, to please a cowardly scamp like Stockton. You can save yourself all risk, and a good share of money besides, by taking the twenty guineas, and riding down the road."

"Ah, ha! Watson Gray!—but where then would be my share at the gutting of the barony?"

"The share of a fool, perhaps, whose fingers are made use of to take the nuts from the fire."

"No more fool than yourself, Watson Gray; and let me tell you to look to yourself as well as the captain. There's more halters than one in preparation."

"Ah, do you say so?" replied Gray, coolly, as the other jerked up the bridle of his horse and prepared to ride forward

"Yes! and I warn you that *you* had better take the road *down* the country, rather than me. Your chance isn't so much better than that of Ned Morton, that you can stand by and see him hoisted, without running a narrow chance of getting your neck into the noose. Now, take my word, for what I'm telling you—you've given me what you call good advice; I'll give you some in return. Do just what you wanted me to do. Turn your horse's head and ride down the country, and don't trust yourself within a day's ride of the barony. By hard pushing, you'll get to Martin's in time for breakfast, while I'll ride for'a'd and take mine at the barony."

"You are very considerate, Joe—very. But I don't despair of convincing you by the sight of the twenty guineas. Gold is so lovely a metal, that a handful of it persuades where all human argument will fail; and I think, that by giving you a sufficient share of it to carry, you will stop long enough, before you go on with this cruel business. You certainly can't find any pleasure in seeing your old friends hung; and when it's to your interest, too, that they should escape, it must be the worst sort of madness in you to go forward."

“You may put it up. I won’t look. I’ll tell you what, Watson Gray—I know very well what’s locked up in Middleton barony. I should be a pretty fool to take twenty guineas, when I can get two hundred.”

Meantime, under the pretence of taking the money from his bosom, Gray had taken a pistol from his belt. This he held in readiness, and within a couple of feet from the head of Brydone. The latter had pushed his horse a little in the advance, while Gray had naturally kept his steed in while extricating the pistol.

“Be persuaded, Brydone,” continued Gray, with all the gentleness of one who was simply bent to conciliate; “only cast your eyes round upon this metal, and you will be convinced. It is a sight which usually proves very convincing.”

But the fellow doggedly refused to turn his head, which he continued to shake negatively.

“No, no!” he answered; “it can’t convince me, Watson Gray. You needn’t to pull out your purse and waste your words. Put up your money. I should be a blasted fool to give up my chance at Middleton barony, and Ned Morton’s share, for so poor a sum as twenty guineas.”

“Fool!” exclaimed Gray, “then die in your folly! Take lead, since gold won’t suit you:” and, with the words, he pulled trigger, and drove a brace of bullets through the skull of his wilful companion. Brydone tumbled from his horse without a groan.

“I would have saved the ass if he would have let me,” said Gray, dismounting leisurely; and, fastening his own and the horse of the murdered man in the thicket, he proceeded to lift the carcass upon his shoulder. He carried it into the deepest part of the woods, a hundred yards or more from the roadside, and, having first emptied the pockets, cast it down into the channel of a little creek, the watery ooze of which did not suffice to cover it. The face was downward, but the back of his head, mangled and shattered by the bullets, remained upward and visible through the water. From the garments of Brydone he gleaned an amount in gold almost as great as that which he had tendered him; and, with characteristic philosophy, he thus

soliloquized while he counted it over and transferred it to his own pockets.

“A clear loss of forty guineas to the foolish fellow. This is all the work of avarice. Now, if his heart hadn't been set upon gutting the barony, he'd have seen the reason of everything I said to him. He'd have seen that it was a short matter of life and death between us. Him or me! Me or him! Turn it which way you will, like '96,* it's still the same. I don't like to use bullets when other arguments will do: but 'twas meant to be so. There was a fate in the matter—as there is pretty much in all matters. He *wasn't* to listen to arguments this time, and I *was* to shoot him. He was a good runner—and that's as much as could be said of him—but a most conceited fool. . . . Well, our reckoning's over. He's got his pay and discharge, and Stockton's lost his witness. I was fearful I'd have to shoot him, when I set out. The foolish fellow! He wouldn't have believed it if I had *told* him. With such a person, feeling is the only sort of believing: a bullet's the only thing to convince a hard head. He's got it, and no more can be said.”

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A SEQUEL TO AN EVIL DEED.

THE probable and ultimate task which Watson Gray had assigned to himself for performance, on quitting the barony that morning, was fairly over; but the murderer, by that sanguinary execution, did not entirely conclude the bloody work which he had thus unscrupulously begun. He was one of those professional monsters, whose brag it is that they make a clean finish of the job, and leave behind them no telltale and unneces-

* The two numbers which compose the name of the old state district of Ninety-Six, expressing the same quantity when viewed on either side, suggested to one of the members of the legislature a grave argument for continuing the name, when a change was contemplated, and effected, for that section of country. A better argument for its preservation was to be found in the distinguished share which it had in the Revolutionary struggle.

sary chips which they might readily put out of sight. He had no scruples in pocketing the money which he had taken from the garments of Brydone; but he knew that the horse of the murdered man could be identified; and accordingly, though with much more reluctance than he had manifested in the case of his master, he decreed to the animal the same fate. He brought him to the spot where he had thrown the body, and despatched him in like manner, by putting a brace of bullets through his head. Then, with all the coolness of the veteran ruffian, he reloaded his weapons where he stood, and, having done so, returned quietly to the spot where his own steed had been fastened.

But the "fate" about which Watson Gray had soliloquized, after the usual fashion of the ruffian, was disposed to be particularly busy that day and in that neighborhood. The gratuitous killing of the horse, though designed to increase the securities of the murderer, helped really to diminish them. The report of his last pistol had awakened other echoes than such as were altogether desirable; and he, who had so lately sent his fellow-creature to his sudden and fearful account, was soon aroused to the necessity of seeking measures for his own life and safety.

He had left the plain which he had made memorable by his evil deed, not more than half a mile behind him, when he was startled by the mellow note of a bugle in his rear. A faint answer was returned from above, and he now began to fear that his path was beset by cavalry. Could it be that Stockton had got some intimation of his departure from the barony, and, suspecting his object, had set off in pursuit? This was the more obvious interpretation of the sounds which alarmed him. This was the most natural suspicion of his mind.

He stopped his horse for a few seconds on the edge of the road, and partly in the cover of the wood, undetermined whether to dismount and take the bushes, or boldly dash forward and trust to the fleetness of his steed. But for the difficulty of hiding the animal, the former would have been the best policy. He chose a middle course and rode off to the left, into the forest, at as easy a pace as was possible. But he had not gone a hundred yards before he espied the imperfect outlines of three

horsemen in a group, on the very line he was pursuing. They were at some distance, and did not, probably, perceive him where he stood. Drawing up his reins, he quietly turned about, and endeavored to cross the road in order to bury himself in the woods opposite; but, in crossing, he saw and was seen by at least twenty other horsemen.

The brief glimpse which was afforded him of these men showed him that they were none of Stockton's, but did not lessen, in any degree, his cause of apprehension, or the necessity of his flight. The pale-yellow crescent which gleamed upon their caps of felt or fur, and their blue uniforms, apprized him that they were the favorite troopers of Clarence Conway; and the wild shout which they set up at seeing him, too plainly told the eagerness with which they were resolved to dash upon their prey. Gnashing his teeth in the bitterness of his disappointment, he growled in loud soliloquy, as he drove the spurs into his charger's sides, and sent him headlong through the woods.

"Hell's curses on such luck. Here, when all was as it should be, to have him cross the track. It will be too late to get back to the captain!"

At this time, the apprehensions of Watson Gray seemed entirely given to his superior. The idea of his own escape being doubtful, did not once seem to cross his mind. He looked up to the sun, which was now speeding rapidly onward to his meridian summits, and muttered,—

"Eight good miles yet, and how many twists and turns beside, the d—l only knows! Would to Heaven that Stockton would only come into the woods now. There could be no more pretty or profitable game for us, than to see his rascals, and these, knocking out each other's brains. Where the deuce did Conway spring from? He's after Stockton, that's clear; but what brought him below? Not a solitary scoundrel of a runner in all last week, to tell us anything—no wonder that we knock our skulls against the pine trees."

Such were his murmurings as he galloped forward. The pursuit was begun with great spirit, from several quarters at the same time; betraying a fact which Gray had not before expected, and which now began to awaken his apprehensions for his

own safety. He was evidently environed by his foes. There had been an effort made to surround him. This, he quickly conjectured to have been in consequence of the alarm which he himself had given, by the use of firearms, in his late performances.

"So much for firing that last pistol. It was not needful. What did I care if they did find the horse afterward. Nobody could trouble me with the matter. But it's too late for wisdom. I must do the best. I don't think they've closed me in quite."

But they had. The very first pistol-shot had been reported to Conway by one of his scouts, and the troop had been scattered instantly, with orders to take a wide circuit, and contract to a common centre, around the spot whence the alarm had arisen. The second shot quickened their movements, and their object was facilitated by the delay to which Gray was subjected in the removal of the body of Brydone, and in the search which he afterward made of the pockets of his victim. He soon saw the fruits of his error—of that which is scarcely an error in a sagacious scout—that Indian caution which secures and smooths everything behind him, even to the obliteration of his own footsteps.

He had ridden but a few hundred yards farther, when he discovered that the foe was still in front of him. Two of the "Congaree Blues," well mounted and armed, were planted directly in his track, and within twenty paces of each other. Both were stationary, and seemed quietly awaiting his approach.

A desperate fight, or a passive surrender was only to be avoided by a *ruse de guerre*. The chances of the two former seemed equally dubious. Watson Gray was a man of brawn, of great activity and muscle. He would not have thought it a doubtful chance, by any means, to have grappled with either of the foes before him. He would have laughed, perhaps, at the absurdity of any apprehensions which might be entertained in his behalf, in such a conflict. But with the two, the case was somewhat different. The one would be able to delay him sufficiently long to permit the other to shoot, or cut him down, at leisure, and without hazard. Surrender was an expedient scarcely more promising. The Black Riders had long since been out of the pale of mercy along the Congaree; and the appeal for quarter,

on the part of one wearing their uniform, would have been answered by short shrift and sure cord.

But there was a *ruse* which he might practise, and to which he now addressed all his energies. He lessened the rapidity of his motion, after satisfying himself by a glance behind him, that he was considerably in advance of the rear pursuit. He was now sufficiently nigh to those in front to hear their voices. They charged him to surrender as he approached; and, with a motion studiously intended for them to see, he returned the pistol to his belt, which before he had kept ready in his hand. This was a pacific sign, and his reply to the challenge confirmed its apparent signification.

“Good terms—good quarter—and I’ll surrender,” was his reply.

“Ay, ay!—you shall have terms enough,” was the answer; and the young dragoon laughed aloud at the seeming anxiety with which the fugitive appeared to insist upon the terms of safety. Gray muttered between his teeth—

“He means good rope; but he shall laugh t’other side of his mouth, the rascal!”

Maintaining an appearance studiously pacific, and giving an occasional glance behind him, as if prompted by terror, Gray took especial care to carry his horse to the right hand of the farthest trooper, who was placed on the right of his comrade, and, as we have said, some twenty paces from him. By this movement he contrived to throw out one of the troopers altogether, the other being between Watson Gray and his comrade. Approaching this one he began drawing up his steed, but when almost up, and when the dragoon looked momentarily to see him dismount, he dashed the spurs suddenly into the animal’s sides, gave him free rein, and adding to his impetus by the wildest halloo of which his lungs were capable, he sent the powerful steed, with irresistible impulse, full against the opposing horse and horseman. The sword of the trooper descended, but it was only while himself and horse were tumbling to the ground. A moment more, and Watson Gray went over his fallen opponent with a bound as free as if the interruption had been such only as a rush offers to the passage of the west wind.

But a new prospect of strife opened before his path almost the instant after. One and another of Conway's troop appeared at almost every interval in the forest. The pursuing party were pressing forward with wild shouts of rage and encouragement from behind, and a darker feeling, and far more solemn conviction of evil, now filled the mind of the outlaw.

"A life's only a life, after all. It's what we all have to pay one day or another. I don't think I shortened Joe Brydone's very much, and if the time's come to shorten mine, I reckon it wouldn't be very far off any how. As for the captain, he don't know, and he'll be blaming me, but I've done the best for him. It's only on his account I'm in this hobble. I could easily have managed Stockton on my own. Well, neither of us knows who's to be first; but the game looks as if 'twas nearly up for me. It won't be the rope though, I reckon. No! no! I'm pretty safe on that score."

The dark impressions of his mind found their utterance, in this form, in the few brief moments that elapsed after the discovery of his new enemies. They did not seem disposed to await his coming forward, as had been the case with the dragoon whom he had foiled and overthrown. They were advancing briskly upon him from every side. He would willingly have awaited them without any movement, but for the rapidly sounding hoofs in the rear. These drove him forward; and he derived a new stimulus of daring, as he discovered among the advancing horsemen the person of Clarence Conway himself.

Watson Gray had imbibed from his leader some portion of the hate which the latter entertained, to a degree so mortal, for his more honorable and fortunate brother. Not that he was a man to entertain much malice. But he had learned to sympathize so much with his confederate in crime, that he gradually shared his hates and prejudices, even though he lacked the same fiery passions which would have provoked their origination in himself. The sight of Clarence Conway aroused in him something more than the mere desire of escape. Of escape, indeed, he did not now think so much. But the desire to drag down with him into the embrace of death an object of so much anxiety and hate, and frequent vexation, was itself a delight; and

the thought begat a hope in his mind, which left him comparatively indifferent to all the dangers which might have threatened himself. He saw Conway approaching, but he did not now wait for his coming. To remain, indeed, was to subject him to the necessity of throwing away his resources of death and of defence, upon the less worthy antagonists who were closing up from behind. Accordingly, drawing both pistols from his belt he dropped the reins of his horse upon his neck, and gave him the spur.

“Beware!” cried Conway to the troopers around him, as he saw this action—“the man is desperate.”

He himself did not seem to value the caution which he expressed to others. He dashed forward to encounter the desperate man, his broadsword waving above his head, and forming, in their sight, the crescent emblem of his followers. With loud cries they pressed forward after his footsteps; but the splendid charger which Conway bestrode, allowed them no chance of interposition. The resolute demeanor, and reckless advance of Conway, probably saved his life. It drew the precipitate fire of Watson Gray, and probably disordered his aim. The bullet shattered the epaulette upon Conway’s shoulder, and grazed the flesh, but scarcely to inflict a wound. Before he could use the second, a henchman of Conway’s, a mere boy, rode up, and shivered the hand which grasped it by a shot, almost sent at hazard, from a single and small pistol which he carried. In another moment the sweeping sabre of Conway descended upon the neck of the outlaw, cutting through the frail resistance of coat and collar, and almost severing the head from the shoulders. The eyes rolled wildly for an instant—the lips gasped, and slightly murmured, and then the insensible frame fell heavily to the earth, already stiffened in the silent embrace of death. The space of time had been fearfully short between his own fate, and that which the murderer had inflicted upon Brydone. His reflections upon that person, may justify us in giving those which fell from the lips of Clarence Conway, as the victim was identified.

“Watson Gray!” said he, “a bad fellow, but a great scout. Next to John Bannister, there was not one like him on the

Congaree. But he was a wretch—a bad, bloody wretch;—he's gone to a dreadful and terrible account. Cover him up, men, as soon as you have searched him. Lieutenant Monk, attend to this man's burial, and join me below. We must see what he has been about there. You say two pistol shots were heard?"

"Two, sir, about ten minutes apart."

"Such a man as Watson Gray, never uses firearms without good cause—we must search and see."

Dividing his little force, Conway gave the order to "trot," and the troop was soon under quick motion, going over the ground which they so recently traversed. The search was keen, and, as we may suppose, successful. The body of Brydone and that of his horse were found, but, as he was unknown, it excited little interest. That he was a Black Rider, and an enemy, was obvious from his dress; and the only subject of marvel was, why Watson Gray should murder one of his own fraternity. It was midday before Clarence Conway took up the line of march for Middleton barony, and this mental inquiry was one for which he could find no plausible solution until some time after he had arrived there. Let us not anticipate his arrival.

CHAPTER XL.

BUCKLING ON ARMOR.

It may readily be supposed that the disappearance of Watson Gray caused some uneasiness in the mind of his principal; but when, hour after hour elapsed, yet brought neither sign nor word which could account for his absence, or remedy its evil consequences, the uneasiness of the outlaw naturally and proportionally increased. The fearful hour was speeding onward to its crisis, as it seemed, with more than the wonted rapidity of time. The aspect of events looked black and threatening. Wounded and feeble, wanting in that agent who, in his own prostration, was the eye, and the wing, and the arm, of his resolves, Edward Morton could not shake off the gathering clouds

of apprehension which hung heavy about his soul. He had risen at the first blushing of the day, and, with the assistance of a servant, contrived to put on his garments. The sword which he was scarcely able to wield—certainly, with no efficiency—was buckled to his side;—but his chief reliance, in the event of a last struggle, lay in his pistols, of which an extra pair had been provided by Watson Gray, the moment he discovered the probable danger of his superior.

As the day advanced, and Gray did not appear, the outlaw felt it necessary to make those preparations, the chief duty of which now promised to devolve upon him; and with some difficulty, descending to the lower story of the house, he proceeded to drill his men in anticipation of the worst. He had already resolved not to go further, unless Gray made his appearance in season and counselled the measure. He had, from the first, been opposed to the trial; though he could not but acknowledge that the arrangement had been most favorable, at the time, which his confederate could hope to make. He was now more thoroughly confirmed than ever in his determination to keep his defences, and convert the mansion-house into a stronghold, which he would surrender only with his life.

The surgeon, Hillhouse, was present, with a double share of resolution, to second his resolve. The picture which Watson Gray had judiciously presented to his mind, the night before, of the sacking of his various wardrobe, by the sable mutineers, had been a subject of sleepless meditation to him the whole night, and had imbued him with a bitter disposition, to kill and destroy, all such savage levellers of taste and fortune as should cross his path or come within shooting distance from the windows. His person was decorated with more than usual care and fastidiousness that morning. He wore a rich crimson trunk, that shone like flame even in the darkened apartments. This was tapered off with stockings of the softest lilac; and the golden buckles which glittered upon his shoes, also served to bring "a strange brightness to the shady place." His coat, worn for the first time since he had reached the barony, was of the rich uniform of the British Guards. Altogether, Surgeon Hillhouse in his present equipments, made a most imposing figure. His per

son was not bad, though his face was monstrous ugly; and he possessed a leg which was symmetry itself. He measured at annual periods, the knee, the calf, and the ankle, and by a comparison with every other handsome leg in the army, he had been able to satisfy himself that his was the perfect standard. It did not lessen the military effect of his appearance, though somewhat incongruous with his display in other respects, that he wore a common belt of sable strapped about his waist, in which were stuck half a dozen pistols of all sizes. He had a taste in this weapon, and had accumulated a moderate assortment, most of which were richly wrought and inlaid with bits of embossed plate, of gold and silver; carvings and decorations which took the shapes of bird, beast, and flower, according to the caprice or fancy of their owner; or, it may be, the artist himself. The more serious and stern outlaw met this display with a look of scorn which he did not seek to suppress, but which the fortunate self-complaisance of the other did not suffer him to see.

“You don’t seem, Mr. Hillhouse,” he observed, as they met, “to anticipate much trouble or danger in this morning’s work.”

“Ah sir! and why do you think so?” demanded the other with some curiosity.

“Your garments seem better adapted for the ball-room and the dance, than for a field of blood and battle. You may be shot, and scalped, or hung, sir, in the course of the morning.”

“True, sir, and for that reason, I have dressed myself in this fashion. The idea of this extreme danger, alone, sir, prompted me to this display. For this reason I made my toilet with extreme care. I consumed, in my ablutions, an entire section of my famous Chinese soap. You perceive, sir, in the language of the divine Shakspeare”—stroking his chin complacently as he spoke—“I have reaped the stubble field also—my chin was never smoother; and, in the conviction, sir, that I might be called upon this day, to make my last public appearance, I have been at special pains to prepare my person to the best advantage, for the inspection of the fortunate persons who will make the final disposition of it. To die with dignity, and to appear after death with grace, has been the reflection which has

occupied my mind this morning, as I made my toilet. My meditations were necessarily of a melancholy complexion. If these rogues are to inherit my wardrobe, let me make as much use of it as I can. I may probably secure this suit to myself by dying in it like a man."

The outlaw scarcely heard these forcible reasons—certainly he did not listen to them. He was already busy in disposing, to the best advantage, of his half score of muskets. The house was one of comparatively great strength. It was of brick, built for service, and had been more than once defended against the assaults of the Congarees. With an adequate force it might have been held against any assailants, unless they brought artillery. But the little squad of Edward Morton was wretchedly inadequate to its defence, even against the small force of Stockton. It required all of his skill, courage, and ingenuity, to make it tolerably secure. He now more than ever felt the absence of Watson Gray. The readiness of resource which that wily ruffian possessed, would, no doubt, have been productive of very important assistance. Even if the garrison could hold out against assault, they could not hope to do so against famine. The provisions of the plantation were already at the mercy of the Black Riders.

The outlaw surveyed his prospects with sufficient misgivings. They were deplorable and discouraging enough. But he never once thought of faltering. His soul felt nothing but defiance. His words breathed nothing but confidence and strength. He laughed—he even laughed with scorn—when Hillhouse said something of a capitulation and terms.

"Terms, sir! ay, we'll give and take terms—such terms as lie at the point of these bayonets, and can be understood from the muzzle of gun and pistol. Terms, indeed! Why do you talk of terms, sir, when we can beat and slay the whole gang of them in twenty minutes! Let them approach and give us a mark at all, and what chance can they have, with their pistols only, against these muskets? Really, Mr. Hillhouse, for a gentleman of high rank in his majesty's army, I am surprised that you should hold such language. If you dread the result, sir—you are at liberty to leave the house this very moment. Go, sir,

to a place of safety, if you can find it; or make your own terms with our enemies, as you or they please. Try it, and you'll find that your fine clothes will be one of the best arguments for hanging you to the first tree;—the Black Riders have long since learned that the finest bird is to be first plucked. We shall remain where we are, and probably inherit your wardrobe after all."

The surgeon was abashed and confounded for the moment. He had not often been compelled to listen to such language; nor did the outlaw intend it so much for the ears of the person whom he addressed as for those who listened around him. He knew the value of big words and bluster, in a time of doubt and danger, to the uninformed and vulgar mind. He felt that nothing could be hoped for, at the hands of his small party, if any of them were suffered to flinch or falter. *He* knew the importance of all that he himself said; but the surgeon did not once suspect it. He recovered from his astonishment, and, after a brief delay, his wounded pride found utterance.

"Really, sir—Mr. Conway—your language is exceedingly objectionable. I shall be constrained to notice it, sir; and to look for redress at your hands at the earliest opportunity."

"Any time, sir—now—when you please—only don't afflict me with your apprehensions. If you can not see, what is clear enough to the blindest mole that ever ploughed up a plain field, that these scoundrels stand no sort of chance against us, in open assault—no words of mine, or of any man, can make you wiser. Like Rugely, you would surrender, I suppose, at the enforcement of a pine log."

A hearty laugh of the soldiers attested the inspiring influences which they had imbibed from the confident bearing and words of Mortou, and their familiarity with an anecdote which, but a little time before, had provoked much mirth in both parties at the expense of a provincial officer, in the British army, served to increase their confidence.* It may be supposed that this

* Colonel Rugely had command of a British stockade near Camden, which was garrisoned by an hundred men. It was summoned by Colonel William Washington. 'Washington was without artillery; but a pine log, which was ingeniously hewn and arranged so as to resemble a field-piece, enforced, to the

burst of merriment did not diminish the anger of Hillhouse; but he contented himself with saying that he should "hide his time."

"You are right, sir, in this respect," said Morton, "we have neither of us any time for private squabbles. Do your duty manfully to-day, Mr. Hillhouse, and if we survive it, I shall be ready to apologise to you to-morrow, or give you whatever satisfaction will please you best. But now to work. These shutters must be closed in and secured."

The lower story was completely closed up by this proceeding. The shutters, of solid oak, were fastened within, and, ascending to the upper story, Morton disposed his men in the different apartments, with strict warning to preserve the closest watch from the windows, at every point of approach. Having completed his disposition of the defences, he requested an interview with the ladies of the house, which was readily granted. The outlaw and surgeon were accordingly ushered into an antechamber in which, amidst the stir and bustle of the events going on below, the ladies had taken refuge. The gentlemen were received with kindness. At such moments—moments of sudden peril and unexpected alarm—the human ties assert their superiority, over the forms of society and the peculiar habits of education, through the medium of our fears; and even the suspicions which the ladies might have had, touching the character of Edward Morton—whom they knew only as Edward Conway—and the contempt which they felt for the fopperies of Hillhouse, gave way entirely before the pressing and mutual necessities which prevailed to the probable danger of the whole.

But, in truth, the appearance of the outlaw, at that moment of his own superior peril, was well calculated to command the admiration even of those who loved him not. Man never looks so noble as when he contends calmly with the obvious danger—when, aware of all its worst characteristics, he yet goes forth to the encounter, with a stern deliberate purpose, which sustains

commander of the post, the propriety of surrendering, at the first summons of the American colonel. This harmless piece of timber, elevated a few feet from the earth, was invested by the apprehension of the garrison with such formidable power, that they were exceedingly glad to find a prompt acceptance of their submission."—*History of South Carolina*, p. 187.

him unsbrinking to the last, and suffers him, at no moment, to seem palsied, weak, or indecisive. Edward Morton wore the aspect of this firmness, in the presence of the ladies. They knew that he was the destined victim whom the Black Riders professed to seek, and seek only;—they knew not exactly why—but their conjecture, naturally enough, in the absence of more certain reasons—assumed it to be in consequence of his Americanism.

Whatever might be the cause, to be the foe of the Black Riders was, in all likelihood, to be the friend of virtue and the right; and as he stood before them, erect for the first time after weeks of painful sickness and prostration—more erect than ever—with a demeanor that did not presume in consequence of his situation—nor challenge, by doubtful looks and tremulous tones, that sympathy which might well be asked for, but never by, “the brave man struggling with the storms of fate;”—he insensibly rose in the estimation of both, as his person seemed to rise nobly and commandingly in their sight.

His voice was gentle and mournful—in this, perhaps, he did not forbear the exercise of some of his habitual hypocrisy. He did not forget for a moment that the keen glances of Flora Middleton were upon him; and like most men of the world, he never forgot that policy which casts about it those seeds which, as they ripen into fruit—whatever the degree of probability—the same hand may gather which has sown.

“Ladies, I am sorry to tell you that my presence has brought danger to your house.”

The venerable lady replied, promptly:—

“I trust, Mr. Conway, that, with the assistance of your followers, you will be able to keep the danger from it.”

“Alas, madam, I must not disguise from you the truth: we are as one to ten only; we may slay many of the assailants, but if they are led by ordinary courage, they may eat through these walls in our spite. I have one hope—that Watson Gray, who left the house last night, will return in season, with a sufficient force to baffle them in their attempts. All that can be done now will be to keep off the moment of danger—to parry for a while, and protract as long as we can, the storm which will come at last.”

“Mr. Conway, I would not disparage your judgment or your valor; but the late General Middleton, when scarcely at your years, beat off three hundred Congarees from the very threshold of this dwelling.”

The outlaw modestly replied, with a bow of the head:—

“We will do what we can do, Mrs. Middleton; but we have a poor squad of ten men in all, not including Mr. Hillhouse and myself. I have no doubt Mr. Hillhouse will do his duty as becomes him——”

“As becomes a gentleman fighting in the presence of the fairest lady——”

Morton continued his speech in season to interrupt some stiltish common-place of the surgeon, which could only have been disgusting to the ladies.

“As for myself, you know my condition. I can die—I need not, I trust, say that, no man could feel it hard to do so, under such circumstances as prevail over us at present—but I have little strength to make my death expensive to our enemies. There is one thing, Mrs. Middleton, that I have deferred speaking to the last.”

He hesitated, and his eyes were fixed sadly for a moment upon the face of Flora, then, as he met her glance, they were instantly averted.

“What is that, sir?” demanded the old lady.

“It is this, madam: there is one proceeding by which it is yet possible to avert from your dwelling the strife which will shortly threaten it.”

“In God’s name, sir, let it be resorted to——”

“If it be right—if it be proper, only, mother,” cried Flora, earnestly, putting her hand upon the wrist of her grandmother.

“Certainly—surely, my child,” was the reply. “Peace and safety are to be purchased only by just conduct. Speak, Mr. Conway, what is the alternative?”

“Professedly, madam, these ruffians seek me alone, of all this household. I am the sole object of their hate—the victim whom they have singled out for their special vengeance. Were I in their hands——”

“Surely, Mr. Conway, you would not think so meanly of my

mother and myself," was the hasty interruption of Flora Middleton, "as to fancy that we could be pleased at your giving up any security, however partial, such as our house affords you, because of the possible annoyance to which we might be subjected on account of this banditti. I trust that you will be able to defend the house, and I hope that you will do so to the last."

The outlaw seemed to catch fire at the manner of the generous girl. Her own flashing eyes were full of a flame to impart enthusiasm to the dullest spirit; and he exclaimed, with a more genuine feeling of zeal than was usual with him:—

"And, by heavens, I will! You have stifled the only doubts which I had of the propriety of making your house my castle. I need not say to you that the hostility of these scoundrels to me is, perhaps, little more than a pretence. Even were I given up to them, and in their hands, they would probably sack your dwelling. They are just now, I suspect, released from nearly all restraint and subjection, and about to fly the country. Lord Rawdon has gone, or is on his way below, by another route, with all his forces; and the men of Sumter, Lee, and Marion, are pressing at the heels of his lordship. Perhaps I speak with literal accuracy when I say that your safety depends on mine. If I fail to make good the house against these Black Riders—you already know their character—I tremble for you! Your safety shall be no less in my thoughts, during this conflict, than my own; and I repeat, once more, my readiness to die before outrage and violence shall cross your threshold."

"We thank you, sir—from the bottom of our hearts, we thank you, Mr. Conway——"

Morton bowed, as he interrupted the strain of feminine acknowledgment:—

"Let me now beg you to seek the garret; there you will be in tolerable safety. If we do not again meet, do me the justice to believe that I spared neither limb nor life in your behalf. I may fall, but I will not falter."

"God be with you, Mr. Conway!" was the ejaculation of both ladies. A blush tinged the cheek of the outlaw—a tremulous emotion passed through his veins. When, before, had

the pure of the purer sex uttered such an invocation in his behalf?

"Can it be an omen of ill,"—such was his reflection—"that it is spoken, as it would seem, in the last moment of my career?"

"I thank you, Mrs. Middleton; I thank you"—to Flora, but he did not speak her name. The direction of his eye indicated the person to whom he spoke. His look and air were not unadroit. He still remembered his policy; and Flora Middleton fancied, as she turned away, that she had not often seen a nobler-looking personage. The contrast between himself and Mr. Hillhouse, perhaps, helped to strengthen this impression. A grave monkey is, of all objects, the most lugubrious, and the plain statements of the outlaw had suddenly made the surgeon very grave. He really did not imagine that things were in so deplorable a condition. Thinking over them rendered him forgetful of his fine sayings, and the attempt which he made to throw some pathos into his parting address to the ladies, was ridiculous without being easy, and elaborate and strained without being free or graceful. When they had gone, Mr. Hillhouse found a more ready tongue, and once more began to intimate the propriety of terms and a flag of truce.

In India, once, an affair of the Sepoys—very much like the present—a sort of mutiny and insurrection—

"No more of this nonsense," said Morton, with the old habit of command which belonged to the captain of the fierce banditti by which he was now threatened. "It's time, Mr. Hillhouse, to be a man, if you ever hope to be like one. Do you hear that trumpet, sir? It is a summons—it opens the business. You talk of terms and overtures—how do you like the idea of making them from the balcony of yonder porch? What! it does not please you? Yet it must be done. Musketeers, to the windows! Cover the approach to the porch, and shoot as I bid—see that no man comes within pistol-shot. I, myself, will parley with these scoundrels.

The door of the great passage-way which divided the dwelling centrally was thrown open, and the outlaw presented himself in the balcony to the eyes of the Black Riders, who had

assembled, some thirty or forty in number, in detached groups, about fifty yards from the building. A yell of ferocious exultation hailed his appearance from below, and attested the excited feelings of malicious hate with which they had been wrought upon to regard their ancient leader.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE SIEGE AND STORM.

A SMILE of mixed bitterness and derision passed over the lips of the outlaw, as he hearkened to the rude but mighty uproar.

"Dogs!" he muttered, "there was a time when I would have made you crouch beneath the lash to your proper attitude!—and I may do so yet. I am not wholly powerless even now!"

As they shouted, an involuntary movement was made by several among them. They rushed toward him, as if their purpose had been to approach him with determined violence. Several of them were dismounted, and these, waving their pistols aloft, were evidently disposed to bring themselves within the necessary distance which should permit of the certain use of their weapon. But Morton, in the intervals of their clamor, suffered them to hear his brief, stern command to the musketeers, whom they might behold at the windows, to be in readiness and watchful.

"Shoot down the first scoundrel that advances with arms. Take good aim and spare none, unless I bid ye."

This order produced a pause in their career. Some incertitude seemed to prevail among them, and, at length, Morton distinguished, beneath a tree in the distance, the persons of Stockton, Darcy, and two others, who were evidently busy in the work of consultation. He himself quietly took his seat upon one of the benches in the balcony, and patiently waited the result of this deliberation. His pistols, broad-mouthed and long, of the heaviest calibre, were ready in his hand and belt, and all well loaded with a brace of balls.

Meanwhile, his resolute appearance, placid manner, and the indifference which his position displayed, were all provocative of increased clamors and commotion among the crowd. They were evidently lashing themselves into fury, as does the bull when he desires the conflict for which he is not yet sufficiently blinded and maddened. Cries of various kinds, but all intended to stimulate their hostility to him, were studiously repeated by the emissaries of his successor. Not the least influential were those which dilated upon the spoils to be gathered from the contemplated sack of the barony—an argument which had most probably been more potent than any other in seducing them away from their fealty to the insubordinate desires of Stockton.

Morton watched all these exhibitions without apprehension, though not without anxiety; and when he turned, and gave a glance to his few followers within the house—drilled men, stubborn and inflexible, who could easier die, under the command to do so, than obey the impulse to flight without hearing the “retreat” sounded, but who had no other resources of mind and character beyond the dogged resolution taught by their military life—his heart misgave him. He felt what he himself might do in command of the Black Riders against such defenders as he then possessed; and he did not deceive himself as to the probable result. One hope yet remained. It was that Watson Gray was somewhere busy in his behalf. His eyes often stretched beyond the park, in the direction of the high road, in the vain hope to see his confederate, with some hastily-gathered recruits, marching to his rescue. At that very moment Gray was quivering in the few brief agonies of death, which he endured under the sabre of Clarence Conway.

The deliberations of Stockton and his confederates were soon at an end, and with them the doubts of the outlaw. Stockton himself made his appearance in the foreground, bearing a white handkerchief fastened to a sapling. His offensive weapons he ostentatiously spread out upon the earth, at some distance from the mansion, when he came fairly into sight. His course, which was intended to inspire confidence in himself among his followers, had been dictated by Darcy.

"They must see that you're as bold as Ned Morton. He comes out in full front, and you must do no less. You must go to meet him. It will look well among the men."

There were some misgivings in Stockton's mind as to the probable risk which he incurred; nor was Darcy himself entirely without them. Morton they knew to be desperate; and if he could conjecture their intentions toward him, they could very well understand how gladly he would avail himself of the appearance of Stockton to extinguish the feud in his blood. The idea, in fact, crossed the mind of Morton himself.

"That scoundrel!"—he muttered as Stockton approached him—"is the cause of all. Were he out of the way—and a single shot does it!—but, no! no!—he has put down his arms; and then there's that base scoundrel Darcy in the background. Were I to shoot Stockton, he would bring out another of these blood-hounds to fill his place. I should gain nothing by it. Patience! Patience! I must bide my time, and wait for the turn of the die."

Meanwhile, Stockton advanced, waving aloft his symbol of peace. Morton rose at his approach, and went forward to the railing of the balcony.

"Well,"—he demanded—"for what purpose does Lieutenant Stockton come?"

"Captain Stockton, if you please. He comes to know if you are ready to deliver yourself up for trial by the troop, as was agreed upon by Watson Gray yesterday."

"Let Watson Gray answer for himself, Captain or Lieutenant Stockton. He will probably be upon your backs with Coffin's cavalry in twenty minutes. For me, sirrah—hear the only answer I make. I bid you defiance; and warn you now to get to your covert with all expedition. You shall have five minutes to return to your confederates; if you linger after that time—ay, or any of your crew—you shall die like dogs. Away!"

The retort of Stockton was that of unmeasured abuse. A volume of oaths and execrations burst from his lips; but Morton resuming his seat, cried to the musketeers—

"Attention—make ready—take aim!"

Enough was effected, without making necessary the final

command, to "fire." Stockton took to his heels, in most undignified retreat; and, stumbling before he quite regained the shelter of the wood, fell, head foremost, and was stretched at full length along the earth, to the merriment of some and the vexation of others among his comrades.

The fury of the conspirator was increased by this event; and he proceeded, with due diligence, to commence the leaguer. His corps were suddenly commanded to disappear from the open ground; and when Edward Morton saw them again, they were in detached parties, preserving cover as well as they could, along the edges of the park, the avenue, a small thicket of sas-safra and cedar that lay along the northern skirts of the mansion-house, and such of the outhouses and domestic offices, as could bring them near enough to act upon the defenders without exposure of themselves.

The body thus distributed was formidably numerous when compared with that of Morton. His estimate made them little less than sixty men. Immediately in front, though beyond the sure reach of musketry, Stockton, himself, prepared to take his stand, surrounded by some half dozen of his troop; and among these, to the increased annoyance of Morton, he saw one who unslung a rifle from his shoulder. At this sight he at once withdrew from the balcony, secured the door, and commanded his musketeers to sink from sight, and avoid unnecessary exposure. The warning was just in season. In the very instant while he spoke the glass was shattered above his own head, and the sharp, clear sound which accompanied the event attested the peculiar utterance of the rifle.

"A little too much powder, or a young hand," said Morton coolly. "Give me your musket, one of you?"

He took his place at the window, detached the bayonet from the muzzle of the gun, and handed it back to the soldier.

"But for the steel"—meaning the bayonet—"the smooth bore would be a child's plaything against that rifle. But I have made a musket tell at a hundred yards, and may again. We must muzzle that rifle if we can."

The gun was scarcely lifted to the eyes of the speaker before its dull, heavy, roar was heard, awakening all the echoes of the

surrounding woods. The men rushed to the window, and as the smoke lifted, they perceived that the party of Stockton was dispersed, while one man stood, leaning, as if in an attitude of suffering, against a tree. The rifle, however, appeared in another hand at some little distance off. Morton shook his head with dissatisfaction, as he recollected that while there were fifty men in the ranks of the enemy, to whom the rifle was a familiar weapon, to disarm one, or a dozen, was to do little or nothing for his own and for the safety of his party. In a few moments after, sudden cries and a discharge of firearms from the opposite quarter of the building betrayed the beginning of the strife where Mr. Hillhouse commanded.

“Keep as well covered as you can, men; but watch well that they do not close in with you. You are but twelve feet above them, and at that distance a pistol is quite as dangerous as a musket. I leave you for an instant only, to look at the rear.”

There, he found Hillhouse, doing his duty as bravely as if he had no fine uniform at hazard.

“You take a needless risk,” said Morton, as he beheld him flashing one of his pretty, but trifling weapons, at the invaders, and exposing, the while, his entire person to their aim. “There will be time enough for that when they are pressing through the breach.”

“They are at it now,” said the other, with a momentary forgetfulness of all his circuitous phraseologies. “They’ve got ladders, and are trying to mount.”

“Indeed!” cried the outlaw, drawing his sabre from the sheath, and pushing Hillhouse aside, with a seeming forgetfulness of his own wounds and infirmities. He approached the window, and saw the truth of the surgeon’s representations. A squad of the Black Riders had, indeed, pressed forward to the wall sufficiently nigh to plant against it, the rack, which they had taken from the stables; and which furnished them a solid and sufficient ladder to carry up two men abreast. Hillhouse, in his haste had suffered the four musketeers who had been allowed him, for the defence of the rear, to fire simultaneously, and, in the interval required by them to reload their pieces, the

ladder had been planted, and half a dozen sable forms were already darting upward, upon its rungs.

“Reload, instantly!” Morton cried to the musketeers. “Keep your small pistols for close conflict, Mr. Hillhouse—they are fit for nothing better.”

The now cool, observing outlaw, receded a moment from the window, while a blaze of pistol-shot from without, shivered the glass. He awaited this discharge, only, to advance, and with better aim, to level a brace of pistols at the same moment, among his foes, just when the ladder was most darkened, and trembling, with their forms.

Of the foremost assailants, when the broad muzzles met their glance, one dashed resolutely forward up the ladder, but received the bullet through his brain and tumbled headlong backward; while the other, with less audacity, endeavoring to retreat, was forced onward by those behind him. He had the alternative only, of throwing himself over, which he did at the risk of a broken neck; and the bullets of the remaining pistol, which Morton had drawn from his belt, were expended upon the rest of the scaling party, by whom they were utterly unexpected.

This discharge had the effect of clearing the ladder for an instant; and Morton, commanding two of the musketeers, who had now reloaded, to keep the enemy at a distance, by a close watch from an adjoining window, endeavored, with the aid of the remaining two, to draw the ladder up, and into the window against which it rested. But the weight of the massive frame was infinitely beyond their strength; and the outlaw contented himself with cutting away the rungs, which formed its steps, with his sabre, as far as his arm could reach. He had not finished this labor ere he was summoned to the front. There, the enemy had also succeeded in drawing the fire of the musketeers; and then, closing in, had effected a permanent lodgment beneath the porch below.

This was a disaster. Under the porch they were most effectually sheltered from any assault from above, and could remain entirely out of sight, unless they themselves determined otherwise. How many of them had succeeded in obtaining this cover, could not be said by the soldiers. Their conjecture, however,

represented it at ten at least—a force fully equal to that which was engaged in the defence.

The brow of Morton grew darker as he discovered this circumstance. The net of the fates was evidently closing around him fast; and, for a moment, he gazed anxiously over the distant stretch of the road, in the fond hope to see Watson Gray riding in to his succor. But he turned away in hopelessness at last. His despondency did not, however, lead to any relaxation of his courage, or of that desperate determination, which he entertained, to make the fight as terrible to his foes as their hostility threatened to be terrible to him. A momentary cessation of the strife appeared to have taken place. The outlaws, who were beneath the balcony, remained perfectly quiescent.

“They can do nothing there, unless we let them. Now, men, do you keep your arms ready. Throw away no shot at the cracking of a pistol. What should it matter to you if the fools snap their puppies all day at a distance of fifty yards. Let no more of them join these below the porch, if you can help it—let none of these get away if bullets can stop their flight; but do not all of you fire at once. Keep one half of your muskets always in reserve for the worst.”

While giving these instructions, Morton was prepared in getting his own weapons in readiness. The strife once begun, with the loss of men to the assailants, could not, he well knew, come to an indefinite or sudden conclusion. There was to be more of it, and his chief apprehensions now arose from the party which had found lodgment under the portico below. To the lower story he despatched one of his soldiers, whom he instructed to remain quiet, in the under passages of the house, in order to make an early report of any movements which might take place in that quarter.

He had scarcely adopted this precaution before the clamors of battle were again renewed in the part where Hillhouse was stationed. Twenty shots were fired on both sides, without intermission, in as many seconds, and, in the midst of all, a deep groan and the fall of a heavy body in the adjoining room, struck cold to the heart of Morton. He could ill afford to lose any one of his small array. He hurried to the scene of operations, and

found that one of the soldiers had fallen. He still lived, but the wound was in his bosom; and a hurried inspection showed it to be from the fatal rifle. The ragged orifice, wrought by the peculiar revolutions of the deadly twist, was large enough to have received a small fowl egg. The dying man looked up to the outlaw, as if to ask if there was any hope. So Morton understood the appealing inquiry in his eyes, and he answered it with soldierly frankness.

"Make your peace with God, my good fellow; it's all over with you. You'll be dead in five minutes."

The man groaned once, shivered fearfully, then turned upon his face. His arms were once stretched out—his fingers endeavored to grasp the floor, then relaxed, then stiffened, and he lay unconscious of the rest. He was dead. Morton stepped over his body and took a hurried glance at the window.

"We have shot three of them," said Hillhouse.

"Would it were thirty! But all will not do. Are you loaded, men, and ready?"

"Yes!" was the answer of all.

"Then keep ready, but keep out of sight. Wait till they mount the ladder, expend no more shot, but rely on the push of the bayonet. There are four of you, and they have but the one ladder. The rifle can not be used while they are on it, and at no other time need you show yourselves."

Such were the hurried directions of the outlaw, which were interrupted by the renewal of the conflict. Once more they were upon the ladder, but, this time, the clamors arose also in front. The attack was simultaneous in both quarters.

"Oh, for twenty muskets, but twenty,"—cried the now thoroughly aroused Morton, as he made his way once more to the little squad which he had left in front—"and dearly should they pay for this audacity! Nay, if I only had my own strength!" he murmured, as he leaned, half fainting, against the door-lintel in the passage.

A new assault from another quarter, aroused him to the consciousness of his increasing dangers, and stimulated him anew with the strength to meet it. The thunders of an axe were heard against the lower door of the entrance, and from the portico where the party had previously found a lodgment.

‘This was what I feared! The trial, the danger, is here at last! But the game is one at which both of us may do mischief. I must be there to meet them. Heaven send that Stockton may be the first to find entrance!’

The soldier now appeared from below giving him the information, which he no longer needed, of the dangers that threatened from that quarter. The cheering reply of Morton sent him down again.

“Ay, ay, back to your post! You shall have help enough before they get in—before you need it.”

From the upper part of the house he drew all the soldiers with the exception of three. One of these kept his place in the front, the other two in the rear, where the attempt had been made to force an entrance by means of the ladder. These stations were left under the direction of the surgeon. The greater danger was now below. He considered the efforts of those above to be feints simply.

“Mr. Hillhouse, you have only to be wary. Your two bayonets, with your own pistols, will keep down all your enemies. But, should you apprehend otherwise, draw the musket from the front of the house to your assistance. There is perhaps less likelihood of assault from that quarter. Below the struggle must be made hand to hand. The passage is narrow, and six stout men may be able to keep it against twenty. Farewell, sir—be firm—I may never see you again.”

The surgeon had some tender philosophy, gleaned from his usual vocabulary of common-places, to spend, even at such a moment, and Morton left him speaking it.

He hurried down stairs with the six soldiers, whom he stationed in the passage-way, but a little in the back-ground, in order that they should not only escape any hurt from the flying fragments of the open door as it should be hewn asunder, but that a sufficient number of the banditti might be allowed to penetrate and crowd the opening. Meanwhile the strokes of the axe continued with little interval. The door was one of those ancient, solid structures of oak, doubled and plated with ribs which, in our day, might almost be employed for beams and rafters. It had been constructed with some reference to a siege

from foes who used no artillery ; and its strength, though it did not baffle, yet breathed not a few of the assailants, before it yielded to the final application of the axe. As the splinters flew around them, Morton wiped the heavy and clammy dew from his forehead. Cold chills were upon him, and yet he felt that there was a burning fever in his brain. The excitement was too great ;—the transition from the bed of wounds and sickness, he felt, must work the most fatal effects even if he survived the struggle. But the solemn conviction had at length reached his soul that he was not to survive. The awful truth had touched his innate mind, that, in a few hours, he must be a portion of the vast, the infinite, the strange eternity.

“ Surely ! I shall not find it hard ! ” was the audible speech which this conviction forced from him. He started at the sound of his own voice. Thought was painful and torturing. The pause which had been allowed him, left him only to agony ; and he longed for the coming on of the strife, and the reckless conflict, to relieve him by their terrible excitements, from thoughts and feelings still more terrible.

This relief, dreadful as it threatened to be, was now at hand. The massive bolts which secured the frame-work of the door were yielding. Some of the panels were driven in—and the soldiers were preparing to lunge away, through the openings, at the hearts of the assailants. But this, Morton positively forbade. In a whisper, he commanded them to keep silent and in the background. Their muskets were levelled, under his direction, rather under breast height, and presented at the entrance ; and, in this position, he awaited, with a stillness like that which precedes the storm, for that moment when he might command all his bolts to be discharged with the unerring certainty of fate.

Moments now bore with them the awful weight of hours ; the impatient murmurs deepened from without ; the strokes of the axe became redoubled ; and the groaning timbers, yielding at every stroke, were already a wreck. Another blow, and the work was done ! Yet, ere the dreadful certainty yawned upon them—ere the chasm was quite complete—a wild chorus of yells above stairs—the rush of hurrying footsteps—the shrieks, and the shot—announced to the gloomy outlaw, below, the oc-

currence of some new disaster. His defences were driven in above!

A troop of the outlaws had, in fact already effected their entrance. They had literally clambered up the slender column of the portico in front—the sentinel placed in that quarter having been just before withdrawn to the rear by Hillhouse, who deemed that he would be more useful there, and under his command. This, with a vanity natural to such a person, he desired to make as respectable as possible. Lifting one of the sashes, without being heard in the din which prevailed below, they had found their way silently into the apartment. Stealing cautiously along the passage, they had come upon the surgeon, while himself and little squad were most busy with the assailants from without. The skirmish between them had been short. The first notice that Hillhouse had of his danger, was from the pistol-shot by which he was stricken down. His men turned to meet their new enemies, and in the brief interval that ensued, other foes dashed up the ladder, through the window, into the apartment, and put the finishing stroke to the conflict there.

Hillhouse was not so much hurt as not to be conscious, before sinking into insensibility, that the outlaws were already stripping him of his gorgeous apparel. His scarlet coat had already passed into the hands of a new owner.

Meanwhile the work was going on below. Morton, when he heard the uproar above, readily divined the extent of his misfortune. But he was not suffered to muse upon it long. His own trial was at hand. The door was finally driven from all its fastenings, there was no longer any obstruction, and the living tide poured in, as Morton fancied they would, in tumultuous masses. Then came the awful order from his lips to "fire!" It was obeyed by the first file of three men, kneeling; the remaining three followed the example a moment after; and yells of anguish ensued, and mingled with the first wild shouts of triumph of the assailants!

It was a moment of mixed pain and terror! Perhaps, if they could have recoiled, they would have done so. But this was now a physical impossibility. The crowd in the rear pressed forward and wedged their comrades who were in the foreground;

while the bayonet plied busily among them. But what could be done, in that way, by six men in a hand to hand conflict with six times their number. The strife was dreadful, but short. Man after man of the outlaws, was spiked upon the dripping steel; but the mass, unable to retreat, were driven forward, mad and foaming, under the feeling of desperation which now filled their hearts. They had now ceased to think or fear, and rushed like the wild bull upon the ready bayonets. The soldiers went down under the sheer pressure of their crowding bodies. The Black Riders darted among and over them, searching each heart separately with their knives; and the only strife which now remained was from the unavoidable conflict among themselves of their jostling and conflicting forms. The hoarse accents of Stockton were now heard, pre-eminent above the uproar, giving his final orders.

“Take Ned Morton alive, my merry fellows. He owes a life to the cord and timber. Save him for it if you can.”

Morton had reserved himself for this moment.

“Ye have tracked the tiger to his den!” he muttered, in the shadow of the stairway, where he had taken his position, partly concealed in the obscurity of the passage. The crisis of his fate was at hand. The party from above were now heard hurrying downward, to mingle in the *melée* below; and he levelled his pistols among the crowd in the direction of Stockton’s voice, and fired—and not without effect. He was now too deliberate to throw away his bullets. One of them passed through the fleshy part of the shoulder of his inveterate enemy, who was in the advance; while the other prostrated in death one of his most forward followers.

Stockton screamed with mingled pain and fury, and with sabre lifted, darted upon his foe. Feebly shouting his hate and defiance, Morton also lifted his sword, which he had leaned on the steps beside him for greater convenience, and advanced gallantly to meet the ruffian. They met, and the whole remaining strength of Morton, treasured up for this very crisis, was thrown into his arm. But the tasks through which he had already gone had exhausted him. The limb fell nerveless by his side, and

ere the blow of Stockton descended, he had sunk down in utter insensibility at the feet of his opponent.

The conflict was ended. The pledge made to the ladies of the mansion had been fully redeemed by its defenders. Not one of them remained unhurt; and the greater number were already stiffened in the unrelaxing grasp of death. The outlaws had paid dearly for their victory. No less than sixteen of the assailants had been slain; and the arts of Stockton, which had originally won them over to his designs, and made them hostile to their ancient leader, now derived additional support from the sanguinary feeling which had been induced by the bloody struggle in their minds. They were now reconciled to that decree which determined that Morton should be their victim. They needed no more persuasion to resolve that he should die upon the gallows.

The first impulse of Stockton, as he straddled the inanimate body of the man whom he so much feared and hated, was to spurn it with his foot—the next to make his fate certain by a free use of his sword upon it; but the cold malignity of his character prevailed to prolong the life and the trial of his enemy. The utter impotence of Morton to do further harm, suggested to Stockton the forbearance which he would not otherwise have displayed. It was with some pains only, and a show of resolution such as Morton had usually employed to hold them in subjection, that he was enabled to keep back his followers, who, in their blind rage, were pressing forward with the same murderous purpose which he had temporarily arrested in his own bosom. With a more decided malignity of mood, he gave a new direction to their bloody impulses.

“Away!” he cried, “get a hurdle, or something that will take him out without much shaking! He has life enough in him yet for the gallows!”

A shout seconded with approbation the dark suggestion, and the crowd rushed away to procure the necessary conveyance. A door, torn from an outhouse, answered this purpose; and the still breathing, but motionless form of Edward Morton, was lifted upon it. Unhappily, he wakened to consciousness in a few moments after leaving the threshold of the dwelling. The purer

atmosphere without revived him; and his eyes opened to encounter the biting scorn, and the insulting triumph, of the wretches he had so lately ruled. His ears were filled with the gross mockeries of those whom his bloody resistance had stimulated to new hate and a deeper ferocity of temper.

A bitter pang went keenly through his heart; but he had still a hope. He had kept one hope in reserve for some such occasion. Long before, when he first commenced that dark career of crime, the cruel fruits of which he was about to reap, he had provided himself with a dagger—a small, stout, but short instrument—which he hid within his bosom. This instrument he devoted to the one particular purpose of taking his own life. He had decreed that it should be sacred—not to employ language illegitimately—to the one work of suicide only. But once, indeed, he had almost violated his resolve. The same instrument he had proffered to poor Mary Clarkson, in a mood, and at a moment of mockery, scarcely less bitter than had fallen to his own lot. The remembrance of the circumstance touched him at this instant, and humbled, in some degree, the exulting feeling which was rising in his breast, at the recollection of his resource. But he did exult, nevertheless. He felt that the dagger was still about him, hidden within the folds of his vest; and, with this knowledge, he was better able to meet the vindictive glance of his foe, who walked beside the litter on which the outlaws were bearing him to the wood.

“Bring him to the Park!” commanded Stockton. “He will hang there more conspicuously, as a warning for other traitors.”

“No! No!—not there!” said Darcy, interposing, “the ladies can see him from the house.”

“Well, and a very good sight it is, too!” replied the other brutally; “they’ve seen him often enough dancing on the earth I fancy; it may be an agreeable change to behold him dancing in air awhile.”

A few serious words, however, whispered in his ears by Darcy, prevailed with Stockton to effect a change in his brutal resolution; and the cavalcade took its way in the direction of the woods where the encampment of the Black Riders for the night had been made. It was intended that there the crowning scene of hate and punishment should take place.

CHAPTER XLII.

HATE BAFFLED BY JUSTICE.

MEANWHILE, what had been the condition of mind of the ladies in the dwelling? They had heard the greater part of the bloody struggle going on below—the shots, the shouts, the groans and shrieks, and all the infernal clamors of that strife of moral feelings and physical passions, in which man, alone, of all the animals, is permitted to indulge. The rending of bolt and bar had also been audible, and they readily conjectured all the rest. They finally knew that the barriers were forced; and when the first rush of the strife was over, and the silence of death prevailed for the first time below, then did they feel assured that death himself was there, surrounded by all his melancholy trophies.

How terrible was then that silence! For the first time during the whole period of their suspense, did Flora Middleton yield herself up to prayer. Before, she could not kneel. While the storm raged below, her soul seemed to be in it; she could not divert it to that calmer, holier contemplation, which invests the purpose with purity, and lifts the eye of the worshipping spirit to the serene courts of Heaven. Her father's spirit was then her own, and she felt all its stimulating strength. She felt that she too could strike, should there be occasion; and when, at one moment, the clamor seemed to be approaching, her eye kindled with keener fire, as it looked round the dim attic in which they had sought refuge, as if in search of some weapon which might defend it.

"It's all over!" at length she exclaimed, when the silence had continued the space of half an hour. "They have left the house, mother."

"Do not trust to go out yet, my child," was the answer of the

grandmother. "I fear some trick, some danger;—for why should they leave us undisturbed, so long?"

"Hark! mother!—there is a noise below."

"Yes; I think so! I hear it!"

"A footstep!—I should know that footstep! A voice! It is—it must be the voice of Clarence Conway."

The keen sense of the interested heart had not deceived the maiden. Clarence Conway was, indeed, within the dwelling. With limbs that trembled, and a heart that shuddered as he advanced, the young commander trod the avenues of the dwelling which bore such bloody proofs, at every footstep, of the fearful conflict which we have faintly endeavored to describe. The victims were all unknown to him, and their uniforms, those equally of the British and the banditti, did not awaken in him any sympathy in their behalf. On the contrary, it would seem that enemies alone had fallen, and the inference was natural enough that they had fallen by the hands of those who were friends to the country.

But how should the patriots have assailed the enemy in the dwelling which, hitherto, among all the Americans, had been considered sacred? Even though it had been made their place of retreat and refuge, such, he would have preferred it to remain, sooner than its peaceful and pure sanctuary should have been dishonored by such unholy tokens. But the more serious concern which troubled him, arose from his apprehensions for Flora and her grandmother. He hurried through the several chambers, calling on their names. Well might his voice thicken with a husky horror, as he heard the responses only of the deserted apartments, in so many mocking echoes. At length, when he was most miserable, and when, in his further search in the upper chambers, he dreaded lest he should happen on their mangled remains, his ear recognised, or he fancied, an answer in those tones which were then doubly dear to his senses.

"Flora, dear Flora!" he cried aloud, but with a rapidity of utterance which almost made his syllables incoherent, lest he should somehow lose the repetition of the sweet assurance which he had so faintly heard before. The door of the attic was

thrown open in the next instant, and the voice of the maiden summoned him to her presence.

He clasped her in his arms with a fervor which could not be put aside; which no mere looks of reserve could discourage or repulse; nay, under circumstances of relief to the maiden which wrought in her mind a momentary forgetfulness of his supposed perfidy.

“Thank God, you are safe!” was his fervent ejaculation; ‘but tell me, dear Flora, what means the horrible carnage which has taken place below?’

“Oh, Clarence—your brother! Is he not there—is he not among the slain?”

“No! he is not among them—what of him? I see none among the slain but British and sworn enemies.”

“Then they have made him prisoner—the Black Riders—they made the assault upon the house because he was in it; their avowed purpose being to execute death upon him as a rebel.”

A sad smile passed over the lips of Clarence, as he heard these words, and his head was shaken with a mournful doubt.

“He has nothing to fear *from them*, Flora!” he replied, “but where are they? How long is it since this dreadful affair took place.”

“Scarce an hour. The horrible strife I seem to hear now. To my senses it is scarcely ended.”

“Enough! I must believe you then. I must fall upon these bloodhounds if I can. Farewell, dear Flora—farewell, for a little while.”

“But your brother—remember, Colonel Conway, that he is your brother!”

“Colonel Conway!” exclaimed the young soldier, with a surprise that was greatly increased as he beheld the looks of the speaker, now suddenly cold and frozen.

“There is something wrong, Flora, I perceive; and it all comes from that same brother, whose relationship you are so anxious to have me remember. Would to God that he had remembered it. But I will save him if I can. You may be right—he may be in danger. Those bloody wretches would not

make much difference between friend and foe, in their love of strife and plunder. But meet me not with such looks when I return."

"Fly, if you would save him. I tremble, Colonel Conway, lest you should be too late!"

"Colonel Conway, again! Flora Middleton, you have again listened to the voice of the slanderer. There must be an explanation of this, dear Flora."

"There shall be, but fly now, if you would be of service—if you would lessen the difficulties of that explanation."

"Be it so! I leave you, Flora, but will leave a few trusty men to rid your dwelling of these bloody tokens. Meanwhile, spare yourself the sight; keep your present place of retreat, till you hear my voice. Farewell."

"Farewell!"—the word was uttered by Flora with emphatic fervor. From her heart she wished *him*, of all others, to fare well! She looked with a longing, lingering gaze after his noble form, so erect, so commanding, so distinguished in all its movements, by the governing strength of a high and fearless soul within.

"Can such a presence conceal such baseness!" she murmured, as she returned to the attic. "Can it be, dear mother?" was the apparently unmeaning expression which fell involuntarily from her lips, as she buried her face in bitter anguish in the bosom of the maternal lady.

Clarence Conway immediately set his troop in motion. He detached his more trusty scouts in advance. At the moment of leaving the house, he had no sort of intelligence which could designate the position of the Black Riders, or even assure him of their near neighborhood. Not an individual was to be seen around the dwelling. The slaves of the plantation, at the first approach of the conflict, took flight to the swamp-thickets; and in these they would remain until long after the storm had overblown.

Conway moved forward therefore with the greatest caution. He might be entering an ambuscade, and certainly had reason to apprehend one, in consequence of the sudden flight of the banditti from the mansion-house before they had sacked it. The

idea that Edward Conway had anything really to fear from those whom he too well knew to be his confederates, was something of an absurdity, which he found little difficulty in dismissing from his mind. He rejoiced, at the first moment of receiving the intelligence, that his brother lived — that he had survived the fiercer conflict which had taken place between them.

But, an instant after, and he almost regretted that such was the case. It was his duty to pursue him as a public enemy, and one of a cast so atrocious that, he well knew, if taken, his life would probably be required by the hands of the summary avenger. The stern justice which in those days required blood for blood, had long since selected the fierce chief of the Black Riders as a conspicuous victim for the gallows; and Clarence Conway, as a means to avoid this cruel possibility, issued the sanguinary orders to his troop to show no quarter. The tenderest form of justice called for their extermination in the shortest possible manner.

This resolve was made and the command given, after he had been advised by the scouts that the enemy were collected in force upon an open ground on the river bluff, a short mile and a half above. The scouts reported that a good deal of confusion appeared among them, but they could not approach sufficiently nigh to ascertain its particular occasion; having returned, in obedience to orders, as soon as they had traced out the enemy's place of retreat. They also conveyed to Conway the further intelligence that they might have gone much nearer with impunity—that the foe, so far from forming an ambush, had not, in fact, taken the usual precautions against attack—had not thrown out any sentinels, and might be surprised with little difficulty.

Upon hearing this, Clarence Conway gave orders for a division of his force into three equal parties; one of which was despatched to make a circuit, and gain a point above them on the river; a second was ordered to traverse the river banks from below; while he, himself, leading on the third division, was to burst suddenly upon them from the forest—the nearest point from which the attack could be made.

These orders had scarcely been given, before the sound of a rifle was heard, in the direction of the spot where the outlaws

were assembled, and this was followed by a confused clamor, as of many voices. This hurried the movement. What was the meaning of that shot? Did it indicate alarm among the enemy? Were they apprized of his approach? Clarence Conway, in all his conjectures, made no sort of approach to the real nature of that one rifle-shot, and yet it was of some importance to him and to his feelings. It rendered a portion of his task less irksome, and far less difficult.

Silently, he led the way for his division—not a bugle sounded—scarce a word was spoken, and the parties separated on their several courses, with no more noise than was unavoidable, from the regular and heavy tread of their horses' feet. It was fortunate for them, perhaps, that the banditti which they sought were only too busy in their own purposes to be heedful of their foes until it was too late. But let us not anticipate.

The Black Riders had borne their victim, with slow steps, upon his litter, to the spot which had been chosen for his last involuntary act of expiation. Their advance was preceded by that of our old friend, the watchful scout, John Bannister. Anxious, to the last degree, for the safety of the ladies of the barony, he had tracked the steps of the outlaws to the assault upon the dwelling—following as closely upon their heels as could be justified by a prudential regard to his own safety. He had beheld so much of the conflict as could be comprehended by one who was compelled to maintain his watch from a distant covert in the woods. The cause of the fight, and the parties to it, were equally inscrutable to him; and this, too, added not a little to the anxiety which filled his mind. This anxiety grew to agony when he discovered that the defences of the dwelling were broken down, and the house in the possession of the banditti. The fate of Flora Middleton was in their hands, and he was impotent to serve or save her. His anguish was truly indescribable, as it was nearly insupportable.

But he was suddenly aroused from its indulgence, when he beheld the crowd, as, leaving the house, it advanced through the grounds to the very spot in the woods in which he had made his hiding-place. It became necessary to decamp; and as he sped back to the place where he had left his canoe in the cus-

tody of the landlord and Jacob Clarkson, he was somewhat surprised to find that they continued to follow in his footsteps. Somewhat wondering at this, and at their brief delay in the dwelling which they had entered after so obstinate a conflict, he ordered Muggs to put himself, Clarkson and the canoe, into close cover, while he, advancing somewhat upon the higher grounds before them, could, from a place of concealment, observe the movements of the enemy, and prescribe the farther conduct of his own attendants.

He had not long to wait. The Black Riders brought their prisoner to the very spot where the body of Mary Clarkson lay buried. The fainting form of the outlaw chieftain was leaned against the head-board which the devoted Bannister had raised to her memory; and, as the anguish following the transfer of his body to the ground from the door on which it had been borne, caused Morton to open his eyes, and restored him to consciousness, the letters "M. C." met his first glance; but their import remained un conjectured. He had not much time allowed him for conjectures of any kind. His implacable foe, Stockton, stood before him with looks of hate and triumph which the prostrate man found it difficult to endure, but utterly impossible to avoid.

"It is all over with you, Ned Morton," said the other. "Will you beg for your life—will you supplicate me for mercy?"

A smile of scorn passed over the lips of the outlaw.

"My life is not in your hands," he replied; "and, if it were, it should be twice forfeit before I should acknowledge your power and ask your mercy. I bid you defiance to the last. I look upon you without fear, though with unsuppressed loathing, as I quit the world; and, in this way, do I baffle all your malice."

As he spoke these words, he drew the little stiletto suddenly from his bosom, and plunged it desperately, and with an effort of all his strength, full at his own heart. But the blow was baffled. The hand of Darcy, who had placed himself behind Morton without his knowledge, was extended at the moment, and grasped the arm which impelled the weapon.

"Not so fast!" cried Stockton, as he wrested the dagger from

his hand, and flung it from him, "there's no cheating the halter. It's a destiny!"

The baffled outlaw writhed himself about, and looking round upon Darcy, with a bitter smile, exclaimed—

"May your last friend fail you, as mine has done, at the last moment!"

A faintness then came over him, his eyes closed, and he sank back exhausted upon the little hillock which covered Mary Clarkson. Little did he at that moment conjecture on whose bosom his body temporarily found repose.

"Up with him at once," cried Stockton; "or he will cheat the gallows at last."

An active brigand then ran up the trunk of a slender water oak that stood highest to the spot. The rope was flung to him and fastened; and two of the banditti, stooping down, raised the fainting outlaw upon their shoulders, while the noose was to be adjusted. As his form was elevated above the level of the rest, the crowd shouted with ferocious exultation. This brought back to the eyes of their destined victim, a portion of their former fire. He recovered a momentary strength. He looked round upon them with scorn. He felt his situation, and all the shame, and all the agony—but his glances were full of life and defiance, and his cheeks were utterly unblenching. The moment of danger, and even of disgrace, was not one to fill his fierce soul with apprehension.

"He'll die game!" muttered John Bannister, who, at length, as he recognised the features of Edward Conway, began to conjecture the truth, and to comprehend the circumstances which were lately so inscrutable.

"He'll die game; he's got some of the good blood of the Conways in him, after all. But it's a mortal pity he should die so, for the family's sake. It's a good name, and he's the blood-kin of Clarence."

The scout lifted his rifle, as he thus soliloquized. The evident desire to interpose, and save the victim from one fate by the substitution of another, was strong and anxious in his mind.

"But, no!"—he said, after he had drawn his sight upon the pale brow of the outlaw — "If it's to be done at all, Jake Clark-

son's the man to do it. He's got a sort of right to Ned Conway's life. Jake! Jake!"

He called up the desolate old man, who, on the lower ground by the river, had not seen these proceedings.

"Jake!" he said—"is your rifle loaded?"

"Yes!"

"Then look, man!—there's your enemy—there's Ned Conway—it's him that they're a-lifting up among them there. I 'spose they want to do him some partic'lar kind of honor, but it's jest over poor Mary's grave!"

The words were electric! The old man grasped and raised his weapon. He saw not the purpose of the crowd, nor did he pause to ask what was the sort of honor which they were disposed to confer upon the outlaw. He saw *him!*—*his* face only! *That* he knew, and that was enough. A moment elapsed—but one!—and the report of the rifle rang sharply along the river banks. In the same moment the men who were lifting Edward Morton to the tree, dropped the body to the ground. The work of death was already done! Their efforts were no longer necessary, as their design was unavailing. The bullet had penetrated the forehead of the outlaw, and his blood streamed from the orifice upon the still fresh mould which covered the victim of his passions. The Black Riders turned to the quarter whence the shot had come, but the boat of John Bannister, bearing himself and his associates, was already at some distance from the shore.

CHAPTER XLIII.

CONCLUSION.

THE rage of Stockton at being thus defrauded of his prey at last, though violent, was of no effect. He discharged his own pistol at the boat which contained the fugitives; an idle act, which was followed by a like discharge from some twenty of his followers. They might as well have aimed their bullets at the moon. John Bannister answered them with a shout — which, to their consternation, found an echo from twenty voices in the woods behind them. They turned to confront an unexpected enemy. Clarence Conway was already upon them. His little band, in advance of the other two divisions, began the fray as soon as it had reached within striking distance; and the sudden effect of the surprise compensated well for the inadequacy of the assailing party. The broadsword was doing fearful execution among the scattered banditti, before Stockton well knew in what direction to turn to meet his enemy.

But the power which he had thus so lately gained, was too sweet, and had called for too much toil and danger, to be yielded without a violent struggle; and, if mere brute courage could have availed for his safety, the outlaw might still have escaped the consequences of his indiscretion. He rallied his men with promptness, enforced their courage by the exhibition of his own; and his numbers, being still superior to the small force which had followed Conway through the woods, the effect of his first onslaught was measurably neutralized, and the issue of the conflict soon grew doubtful.

But it did not long remain so. The division from below soon struck in, and the outlaws gave way. They broke at length, and endeavored to find safety by flying up the banks of the river; but here they were met by a third division of Conway's

squadron, and their retreat entirely cut off. Hemmed in on every side, assured that no quarter would be given them, they asked for none, but fought and died upon the ground to which they had been forced.

It was the fortune of Stockton to fall under the sabre of Clarence Conway; while Darcy, leaping into the river, perished beneath a blow from the clubbed rifle of John Bannister, whose boat, a moment after touched the shore.

Nothing could exceed the rapturous expressions of his wild whoop of joy at this unlooked-for meeting. Meeting with his friend and leader, in a moment of such complete victory, amply atoned to him for all the trials, risks and anxieties, to which he had been exposed, from the night of their separation. Not one of the Black Riders escaped the conflict. The greater number fell beneath the swords of their conquerors; but some few, in their desperation, leapt into the Congaree, which finally engulfed them all. Clarence Conway, after the close of the conflict, devoted a few painful moments to the examination of the bloody field. But John Bannister threw himself between his commander and one of the victims of the day. The eye of Clarence, searchingly fell on that of his follower; and he at once divined the meaning of the interruption.

"It's here then, that *he* lies, John? How did he die?"

"Yes, Clarence, there he is;—a rifle bullet kept off a worse *ending*. He died like a brave man, though it mou't be he didn't live like a good one. Leave the rest to me, Clarence. I'll see that he's put decently out of sight. But you'd better push up and see Miss Flora, and the old lady. I reckon they've had a mighty scary time of it."

"I thank you, John. I will look but once on the son of my father, and leave the rest to you."

"It's a ragged hole that a rifle bullet works in a white forehead, Clarence, and you'll hardly know it; said the scout as he reluctantly gave way before the approach of his superior. Clarence Conway gazed in silence for a space upon the inanimate and bloody form before him; a big tear gathered slowly in his eyes; but he brushed away the intruder with a hasty hand, while he turned once more to meet his followers who were

slowly gathering in the back ground. He felt, even at that moment, a cheering sensation, as he knew that his brother had fallen by another hand than his. That pang, at least, was spared him; and for the rest, the cause of sorrow was comparatively slight.

“He could have lived,” he murmured as he turned away from the bloody spectacle—“He could have lived only as a dishonored and a suspected man. His path would have been stained with crime, and dogged by enemies. It is better that it is thus! May God have mercy on his soul!”

Our story is on the threshold of conclusion. We have little more to say. Flora Middleton and her lover were soon reconciled, and the misunderstanding between them easily and promptly explained. Jacob Clarkson and John Bannister were living and sufficient witnesses to save Clarence Conway the necessity of answering for himself, and of denouncing his late kinsman. Between unsophisticated and sensible people, such as we have sought to make our lovers appear, there could be no possibility of a protracted session of doubts, misgivings, shynesses and suspicions, which a frank heart and a generous spirit, could not breathe under for a day, but which an ingenious novelist could protract through a term of years, and half a dozen volumes. In the course of a brief year following these events, the British were beaten from the country, and Clarence and Flora united in the holy bonds of matrimony. The last was an event which nobody ever supposed was regretted by either. John Bannister lived with them at the barony, from the time of their marriage, through the pleasant seasons of a protracted life. Many of our readers may remember to have seen the white-headed old man who, in his latter days, exchanged his *soubriquet* of Supple Jack, for one more dignified, though, possibly, less popular among the other sex. He was called “Bachelor Bannister,” toward the closing years of his life, and, when in the presence of the ladies, did not quarrel with the designation. His long stories about the Revolution, of his own feats and those of Clarence Conway, were remembered and repeated by him, with little variation, to the last. In this he differed considerably from ordinary chroniclers of the

old school, simply, perhaps, because his stories were originally more truthful, and his memory, in spite of his years, which were "frosty yet kindly," was singularly tenacious to the end. Our narrative has been compiled from particulars chiefly gained, though at second-hand, from this veracious source.

John Bannister lived long enough to see the eldest son of Clarence Conway almost as good a marksman with the rifle, and as supple a forester, as he himself had been in his better days; and his dying moments were consoled, by the affectionate offices of those, whom, with a paternal wisdom, he had chosen for his friends from the beginning. It may be stated, *en passant*, that our exquisite, Mr. Surgeon Hillhouse, neither lost his life nor his wardrobe in the conflict at Middleton Barony. He survived his wounds and saved his luggage. His self-esteem was also preserved, strange to say, in spite of all his failures with the sex. He was one whom Providence had wondrously blessed in this particular. Of self-esteem he had quite as many garments, if not more, than were allotted to his person. He certainly had a full and fresh suit for every day in the year.

THE END



